



Routledge Studies in Modern British History

THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY, 1914–1939

**THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF A
SOCIALIST PARTY**

Keith Laybourn



The Independent Labour Party, 1914–1939

Historians of political history are fascinated by the rise and fall of political parties and, for twentieth-century Britain, most obviously the rise of the Labour Party and the decline of the Liberal Party. What is often overlooked in this political development is the work of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), which was a formative influence in the growth of the political Labour movement and its leaders in the late nineteenth century and the early to mid-twentieth century. The ILP supplied the Labour Party with some of its leading political figures, such as Ramsay MacDonald, and moved the Labour Party along the road of parliamentary socialism. However, divided over the First World War and challenged by the Labour Party becoming socialist in 1918, it had to face the fact that it was no longer the major parliamentary socialist party in Britain.

Although it recovered after the First World War, rising to between 37,000 and 55,000 members, it came into conflict with the Labour Party and two Labour governments over their gradualist approach to socialism. This eventually led to its disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1932 and its subsequent fragmentation into pro-Labour, pro-communist and independent groups. Its new revolutionary policy divided its members, as did the Abyssinian crisis, the Spanish Civil War and the Moscow Show Trials. By the end of the 1930s, seeking to re-affiliate to the Labour Party, it had been reduced to 2,000 to 3,000 members, was a sect rather than a party and had earned Hugh Dalton's description that it was the 'ILP flea'.

In the following monograph, Keith Laybourn analyses the dynamic shifts in this history across 25 years. This scholarship will prove foundational for scholars and researchers of modern British history and socialist thought in the twentieth century.

Keith Laybourn is the Diamond Jubilee Professor at the University of Huddersfield within the Division of History, where he has previously been Professor of Modern British History. He is also President of the Society for the Study of Labour History.

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The Independent Labour Party, 1914–1939

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Keith Laybourn

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Jack (John) Reynolds (1915–1988), an historian of medieval and local history, and author of a book on Titus Salt, who taught me about the Independent Labour Party when I was a student at the University of Bradford between 1964 and 1967. My early writings on the ILP were jointly authored with Jack.



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Every effort has been made to avoid any infringement of copyrights, and the publishers' guidelines on secondary printed works have been observed. However, I apologise unreservedly to any copyright holders whose permission has been inadvertently overlooked.

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Abbreviations

BLPES	British Library of Political and Economic Sciences
BSP	British Socialist Party
BTLC	Bradford Trades and Labour Council
BWL	British Workers' League
CI	Communist International (Comintern or Third International)
CO	Conscientious Objector
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
DORA	Defence of the Realm Act
IBRSU	International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity
IE	Inner Executive
FAU	Friend's Ambulance Unit
ILP	Independent Labour Party
ISP	Independent Socialist Party
IWUSP	International Working Unions of Socialist Parties (often referred to as the Vienna Union, or International, and the Three and a Half International)
LSE	London School of Economics
LRC	Labour Representation Committee
LSI	Labour and Socialist International
NAC	National Administrative Council (of the ILP)
NEC	National Executive Committee (of the Labour Party)
NCF	No-Conscription Fellowship
NGL	National Guilds' League
NSP	National Socialist Party
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
POUM	Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista
RPC	Revolutionary Policy Committee
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
SDP	(German) Social Democratic Party
SL	Socialist League
SLP	Socialist Labour Party
SPGB	Socialist Party of Great Britain
SSIP	Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda

SSP	Scottish Socialist Party
TI	Third International
TNA	The National Archives
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UDC	Union of Democratic Control
WEWNC	War Emergency: Workers' National Committee
WMF	Workers' Municipal Federation
YCI	Young Communist International
YCL	Young Communist League



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Introduction

Historians are fascinated by the rise and fall of political parties and, most obviously for early twentieth-century Britain, the rise of the Labour Party, the decline of the Liberal Party and the amazing political revival of the Conservative Party from its political malaise on the eve of the Great War. However, smaller political parties have often been ignored, or marginalised, in the volatile political landscape of the early twentieth century, none more so than the Independent Labour Party (ILP), a democratic reformist socialist party that exerted a formative influence on the growth of the early Labour Party, supplying many of its leaders, such as James Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald, and helping to shape social democracy, socialism and parliamentary socialism in Britain. Both before and during the ILP's decline from the mid-1920s, and its disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1932, it clearly exerted considerable influence upon the democratic and radical politics of Britain. Indeed, Fenner Brockway, a long-time leading figure within the ILP, suggested in his book, *Inside the Left*, that it was the powerhouse of intellectual thought and debate in the early 1920s, the place where political ideas were fermenting and where politicians needed to be.

The ILP was responsible in those days, The Labour Party was rising to the crest of its strength and wealthy converts buzzed around us, on a course to be adopted as candidates, proffering contributions in the hope of securing rewards after the manner of the old parties.¹

The ILP experienced the highs and lows of political power and influence, enjoying two periods of significant expansion (1893–1914 and 1918–1926) and enduring two periods of serious contraction (1914–1917 and 1927–1975) between its formation as a national body in 1893 and its demise as a political party in 1975. Emerging from a plethora of socialist parties and labour unions, it had been formed as a national organisation at Bradford in January 1893 and subsequently developed under the leadership of James Keir Hardie, James Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden and J. Bruce Glasier, to play a major role in the formation of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) in 1900, the alliance of socialist parties and trade unions which renamed itself as the Labour Party in February 1906. The ILP continued to influence the growth of the Labour Party at both the

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national and local levels, frequently controlling local Labour politics – as it did in Bradford, Leicester, Glasgow, Clydeside and other areas – until the early 1930s. However, during the Great War (1914–1918), the ILP dramatically lost support and influence owing to the public perception that it was a pacifist organisation, though it actually practiced liberty of conscience for all its members who were deeply divided on the Great War, despite the decision of its 1915 ILP Annual Conference to pass a pacifist resolution. It lost about a third of its membership between 1914 and 1916 but recovered much of that lost membership when the Peace Campaign began seriously in 1917. However, it lost its primacy as a socialist parliamentary party when it had its birth right ‘filched’ by the Labour Party, which adopted the famous Clause Four (3d) in its 1918 Constitution, committing it to public ownership of the means of production.² Thereafter the ILP bitterly debated its future – some of its members supporting the Third International (TI) or Communist International (CI) because of the emergence of the Soviet Union, others intending to wind up the Party and move entirely into Labour, whilst yet others wished the ILP to continue in a new form. Indeed, David Howell has written that ‘within the remodelled [Labour] party the ILP was an anomaly. . . . The fundamental anomaly was rather that the ILP was a potentially discordant element because of its thorough and separate structure’.³

Debating its own future, the ILP emerged in 1922 with a new Constitution and under the direction and influence of Clifford Allen – a middle-class Conscientious Objector (CO) of the Great War and a famous internationalist who sought to make the ILP both a think tank and a practical political party – before it was stymied by the formation of the Labour minority governments of 1924 and 1929–1931, whose failures to push forward with socialist policies weakened the ILP faith in the pace of the forward march of Labour, and encouraged it to further develop its guild socialist policies, adopted in its 1922 Constitution. Its new guild view of society saw the individual both as a consumer (making political and economic decisions) and as a producer (determining how those decisions would be achieved) in a harmonious relationship within a new structure of society. The 1922 Constitution, which went beyond a mere commitment to parliamentary socialism, was seen as a vital component in dealing with the main conundrum facing the ILP: how was it to achieve a permanent state of socialism in Britain whilst maintaining its belief in the will of the people operating through a Parliament returned at general elections by a vacillating electorate? It was a question which divided those such as Fred Jowett of Bradford, who believed in parliamentary and municipal democracy, from those such as Dr. Carl Cullen, who was the chairman of the London Poplar branch of the ILP, who favoured some type of democratic centralism through the dictatorship of the proletariat, or some variety of communism.⁴ Control by committees, as exercised in local government, rather than Cabinet government, was famously suggested by Fred Jowett as a means to achieving democratic control over Parliament and governments, his driving ambition being to make parliamentary politics work for the working class, whilst others suggested of guild socialism, or even of a Labour government legislating for socialism. Yet others, as already

suggested, eschewed social democracy and radicalism altogether in favour of democratic centralism.

Eventually, the ILP foundered in the face of internal conflicts, particularly between the 'Clydesiders' (including Jimmy Maxton and John Wheatley), whose focus was more about Glasgow and domestic politics than that of internationalists, such as Clifford Allen and his supporters. This was at a time in the 1920s when some of its prominent early leaders, such as Philip Snowden and Ramsay MacDonald, were drifting away from the ILP and into the Labour Party. The ILP's 'Socialism in Our Time' campaign, a Hobsonian under-consumptionist type of policy, begun in 1926 after several years of discussion, was driven by the gradualism of the 1924 Labour government and was taken over from Allen and his middle-class supporters and revolutionised by Jimmy Maxton and the ILP Clydeside MPs, in the process, becoming a conflicting set of policies aimed at promoting better conditions, child allowances and a 'living wage' for the working classes at the same time as offering the prospect of revolutionary social change. This conflict became more pronounced when Maxton was elected Chairman of the ILP at the Annual Easter Conference held at Whitley Bay in 1926. Was the programme about offering palliatives to tackle poverty or one of stressing the need for slow, but revolutionary, change? The debate over the intention of the Cook-Maxton Pact of 1928 to form a new party containing the ILP and communist members, sparked by the heated debate in the National Administrative Council (NAC) in June 1928 about whether or not the ILP should be an academic propaganda group or a political party, exacerbated tensions within the ILP.⁵ John Paton, general secretary of the ILP from 1927 until 1933, and very much a Maxton supporter, considered resigning over the pact, but since 'there was no conscious breach of Party or personal loyalty', did not do so. And the National Administrative Council of the ILP concurred for, whilst Emanuel Shinwell, Fred Jowett and Patrick (P. J.) Dollan were hostile to the pact, Dollan's motion against it was defeated by seven votes to five.⁶ Nevertheless, the decline in membership speeded up and the ILP disaffiliation from the Labour Party at the end of July 1932, ostensibly over the imposition of the Labour Party's Standing Orders to restrict the freedom of MPs in their votes, speeded up the decline of the ILP.

The loss of about a third of ILP members in the immediate wake of disaffiliation, and a steady decline, thereafter, doomed it to political oblivion as it effectively became a lens for all of the major disputes that dominated the Left in Britain during the 1930s. Many of its members, MPs and councillors remained with the Labour Party after disaffiliation in 1932, whilst some joined other socialist societies or simply left the ILP altogether without further trace. Dollan formed the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), which took a substantial part of the membership of the important Scottish Divisional ILP outside Maxton-dominated parts of Glasgow, and E. F. Wise formed the National Affiliation Committee which joined with G. D. H. Cole's Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda (SSIP) to form the Socialist League. In the mid and late 1930s the ILP's remaining stalwarts were torn into at least a five-way split between the communist party, whose British membership was considerably smaller than that of the ILP in 1932; the London-based

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Revolutionary Policy Committee (RPC); the Lancashire-based Unity Group; the Trotskyist Marxist group, largely based in London and led by C. L. R. James; and those wishing to continue membership in the ILP under the leadership of Jimmy Maxton and Fenner Brockway. The last of these groups wished for continued unity to sustain the ILP as an independent and broad-based party defending social democracy, parliamentary in the case of Fred Jowett, but advocating a nebulous form of 'revolutionary socialism' in the 1930s. The Unity Group of members from Lancashire, East Anglia and London failed to get the revolutionary policy of the Party overturned in 1934 and left to form the Independent Socialist Party; and, soon afterwards, the RPC, also failing to get the 1934 ILP Conference at York to agree to join the Communist International and the Communist Party of Great Britain, left the Party.

The ILP courted the communist party in the early 1930s and also occasionally gained prominent recruits, most famously George Orwell, who joined the ILP after having fought alongside the 25 or so ILP recruits who joined the anarchist organisation, Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista (POUM), during the Spanish Civil War.⁷ Despite the ILP's brief reversal of its traditional pacifist and anti-war policy in this conflict, it continued to decline and was involved in negotiations about joining the Third International in the late 1930s and then in re-affiliating with the Labour Party up to the eve of the Second World War. Thereafter, the ILP opposed the Second World War, before gently fading into obscurity, becoming a rapidly diminishing force within British Labour politics. It eventually ceased to exist as a political party on 1 May 1975, before re-emerging as Independent Labour Publications and re-associating itself with the Labour Party. In the early 1990s there was a flutter of interest in reviving it as a political party, partly initiated by Barry Winter; through this initiative and its intended vague, almost 'will o' the wisp' policies, it never came to fruition.⁸

The ILP was always identified with community influence, guild socialism in the inter-war years and freedom of opinion, generally rejecting the democratic centralism which shaped the thinking of Marxist organisations. Throughout its history, it supported inner-party democracy to the point of allowing liberty of conscience to its members to ignore party policies and emphasising such freedoms for its MPs as it, for instance, promoted national government by Fred Jowett's idea of rule by parliamentary committee rather than by Cabinet. It supported internationalism throughout the world, devolution within Britain and women's rights from the time of the early suffrage campaigns to the winning of full female franchise in 1928. It opposed imperialism, fought against the empire and for a Socialist Commonwealth. Above all, it was a great defender of socialist democracy in the turbulent and volatile politics of the inter-war years as the political Right and fascism won support in both Britain and Europe; yet it opposed the Second World War.

Writing the history of the ILP

It is perhaps not surprising, from this brief overview, that the history of the ILP has often been divided by historians into sharply contrasting periods of historical

development. For the years prior to 1914, it has often been presented as a major participant in the heroic growth of the Labour Party, acting as its intellectual god-parent, spawning its main leaders and shaping its commitment to social democracy and socialism.⁹ In contrast, after 1914 it has usually been seen as a marginal, sometimes irresponsible, socialist organisation playing little or no part in the so-called forward march of Labour, if there ever was such a thing. A. J. P. Taylor, the famous historian, once suggested that it was composed largely of combative groups of working-class socialists aiming to launch a social revolution and also acting as ‘a refuge for middle-class idealists’.¹⁰ David Howell has seen its role slightly differently in stressing that there was no great forward march of Labour, in his book, *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis 1922–1931* (2002). To him MacDonald's Labour Party struggled between a variety of competing identities and forces – such as trade unions, the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) and socialist parties – in which the ILP, with its emphasis on local community, internationalism and social democracy maintained a nuanced relationship with Labour in which it ultimately lost out to the increasing influence of the competing political pressure groups.¹¹ Nevertheless, to many active Labour supporters it remained, almost nostalgically, the moral conscience of the Labour Party until disaffiliation in 1932. Gidon Cohen has asserted that, even after that date, it played an important, though diminishing role, in Labour politics.¹² Indeed, it continued to play the role that it had always played, of being an agency of socialism, operating within a society that was clearly not socialist and contributing to the radical politics of the age.

Despite the ILP's decline during the inter-war years, it was active in an age of intense political conflict where progressive, Marxist and socialist ideas came into conflict with the challenge of the Right and fascism, both in Britain and in Europe. Until disaffiliation in 1932, about half of the MPs in the PLP were members of the ILP at parliamentary elections, though nominally attached rather than actively involved since they were not financially supported by the ILP. Most of these MPs left the ILP following the disaffiliation crisis in 1932; only four of the five ILP MPs returned in the 1931 general election, and considerably fewer of the 37 returned at its height in 1922. Yet there is no doubt that the ILP had helped to shape the Labour Party's parliamentary approach to socialism in its early years, though it was always more focused upon the politics of the community than on national politics and guild socialism, though it flirted with revolutionary politics and democratic centralism in the 1930s. It even played a small part in opposing fascism during the Spanish Civil War, capturing the interest of George Orwell, who wrote of the Spanish Civil War in his passionate and committed account of events in his *Homage to Catalonia* (1938).

The early history of the ILP has been the subject of considerable research, and most obviously there is a collection of essays edited by David James, Tony Jowitt and Keith Laybourn entitled *The Centennial History of the ILP* (1992), and David Howell's monumental tome, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1888–1906* (1983).¹³ There have also been several PhDs dealing with regional histories or specific policies.¹⁴ However, the vast majority of this plenitude of

published research focuses on the years before 1914. In comparison, the Great War and, to a much greater extent, the inter-war years have attracted much less attention, with some notable, though now sometimes dated, exceptions. R. K. Middlemass, *The Clydesiders: A Left Wing Struggle for Parliamentary Power* (1965) provided a detailed study of the Clydeside group, dubbed the 'Awkward Squad', and their role in national politics during the inter-war years as they moved the balance of the ILP briefly away from international and towards domestic politics and moved the focus of ILP activities from London, Lancashire and Bradford to Glasgow to the Clydeside constituencies.¹⁵ To Middlemass, the ILP did 'commit suicide in a fit of insanity' by disaffiliating from Labour in 1932 and had only a small part to play in the political Labour movement after 1932. R. E. Dowse, in his book, *Left in the Centre: The Independent Labour Party 1893–1940* (1966) also provided a wide-ranging, if thinly evidenced and now largely dated, national study of the ILP, although it set up the idea of the post-war revival of the ILP under Clifford Allen's leadership, its swift demise under the leadership of Maxton and the Clydesiders and a 'lack of identity' after 1932.¹⁶ More recently, Gidon Cohen's monograph, *The Failure of a Dream: The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II* (2007), offered a new perspective, new research and a synthesis of existing work, studded with local examples of the history of the ILP from 1932 to 1939. Indeed, Cohen, whilst focusing upon the national events, attempts to move away from a purely national history of the Party in the 1930s to the local level. His book also offers a fascinating glimpse of the Lancashire-based Unity Group and the attempt to build up Anti-War Councils and Tenants' Defence Committees, suggesting that the ILP had many different local identities.¹⁷ More recently, Ian Bullock has published, *Under Siege: The Independent Labour Party in Interwar Britain* (2017), essentially a very detailed national history of the ILP during the inter-war years which presents the ILP as a major defender of the social democratic tradition in Britain, faced with a decline in its status as the Labour governments of 1924 and 1929–1931 were formed. However, according to Bullock, its efforts could never find an answer as to how to create a permanent socialist state within a democratic system.¹⁸

These broad-based national histories have been complemented by a small number of more focused regional studies. Alan McKinlay and R. J. Morris edited a collection of essays entitled *The ILP on Clydeside 1893–1932: From foundation to disintegration* (1991), which alight upon the years when it appeared to have political impact and assume that the ILP had little influence in Scotland after 1932. In contrast, Richard Stevens has written on the 'Rapid Demise or Slow Death? The Independent Labour Party in Derby, 1932–1945' (1997), indicating that, against the national trend, the ILP branch in Derby increased its membership after the disaffiliation crisis of 1932.¹⁹ There has also been only one significant attempt to bring the grass roots of the political Labour movement to the fore. Matthew Worley has edited a collection of essays entitled *Labour's Grass Roots: Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918–45*.²⁰ This reveals the diversity of Labour's grass roots development, which was often underpinned by trade unionism, but also reveals that other forces, such as the ILP,

were at work amongst members whose lives were often shaped by an endless round of money-raising socials, jumble sales and, the almost ubiquitous, whist drives. Indeed, Gidon Cohen's contribution to this collection very much focuses upon how and why the ILP performed well in Glasgow and Norwich.²¹ Success in Glasgow is hardly surprising, since that was the centre of national, as well as local, ILP activity from the early 1920s, although by the mid-1930s, it was down to about 10 per cent of the 4,000 members it once boasted in the 1920s. What is more surprising is that Norwich also, like the Derby and Nottingham ILP branches, burgeoned rather than declined immediately after the ILP's disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1932. Norwich was to become the largest ILP branch in the 1930s, doubling its membership to around 800 to 900 members in the late 1930s, driven on by the vitality of its club life and its involvement in sustaining Keir Hardie Hall, though also influenced and dominated by some of the leading figures in the ILP.²² Yet other issues emerge, for whilst the English and Scottish ILP histories have been well served in the past, those of Wales have been neglected until the recent work of Martin Wright, *Wales and Socialism: Political Culture and National Identity before the Great War* (2016), although this obviously does not deal with the ILP in the Great War or the inter-war years, and Daryl Leeworthy, *Labour Country: South Wales 1835–1985* (2018).²³ These books raise the issue of Welsh nationalism, examine the work of Robert Jones Derfel, a Welsh Baptist nationalist turned socialist, who operated through the ILP from the 1890s until the turn of the century, and the promotion of Welsh nationalism through the revival of the Welsh language rather than through politics itself, eschewing the idea that nationalism was somehow the language of the Right rather than the Left and luxuriating in a belief that both nationalist and internationalist ideas could be represented through the ILP.

To these studies may be added many local and regional studies of ILP and Labour movements, often dealing with labour and radical movements. Cyril Pearce has written of the strength of pacifism and the anti-war movement in Huddersfield in the Great War in his *Comrades in Conscience* book, whilst Keith Laybourn has challenged the existence of such support for peace in the textile district of the West Riding in Yorkshire, and in Bradford and Huddersfield in particular.²⁴

Clearly, local and regional issues sustained the ILP in the 1920s, and its remnant rump in the 1930s, just as much as the national and international events it responded to at the national level. This raises a number of questions. How did these regional and local branches, and their experiences, shape the national ILP and its view of the wider political developments of the inter-war years? How did the branches view the prospect that the British democratic parliamentary system, as adopted in 1918, would never permit the creation of a permanent socialist state, as highlighted by Ross McKibben in his book, *Parties and People: England 1914–1951*?²⁵ Where did these activities place the ILP within the competing identities of MacDonald's party, examined so perceptively in Howell's nuanced study, *MacDonald's Party*? Indeed, where did grass roots opinion fit within the increasingly sectarian, fractured and impotent socialist politics of the 1930s which Ben Pimlott analysed in his book, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (1977)?²⁶

Autobiographies and biographies have provided vital details on the political machinations of the ILP, but again they are firmly focused upon the narrative of national and personal events, and some are blatantly self-serving. Gordon Brown's study of *Maxton* (1986) and other studies on Maxton by J. McNair and I. Wood, David Kirkwood's *My Life of Revolt* (1935), and John Hannon's *The Life of John Wheatley* provide detailed information on the events of the Scottish ILP leaders. Fenner Brockway's *Socialism Over Sixty Years: The Life of Jowett of Bradford 1864–1944* (1946) and his *Towards Tomorrow: The autobiography of Fenner Brockway* (1977), itself an updated version of his *Inside the Left*, and Arthur Marwick's *Clifford Allen: The Open Conspirator* (1964), all provide valuable insight into the national, and even local, developments of the inter-war ILP. David Marquand's biography, *Ramsay MacDonald* (1977), also provides enormous insight into the early political career of MacDonald in the ILP from 1895 until the mid and late 1920s, when this political emphasis changed from ILP to Labour Party politics.²⁷ Yet not one of these autobiographies and biographies is sufficient, in itself, to furnish a full picture of the activities of the inter-war ILP.²⁸ In some respects Brockway cornered the market on the heroic study of ILP leaders, writing biographies on Fred Jowett and Alfred Salter, whilst John McNair's study of Maxton is little more than a worshipful biography, hagiography in the worst sense of the word. Such a heroic perspective limits the value of McNair's book.

Primary sources

In 2017 the National Register of Archives listed only 84 collections of ILP branch and regional records, only 54 of which deal with the Great War and the inter-war years, and many often briefly and tenuously. Most of these collections are to be found in the British Library of Political and Economic Science at the London School of Economics (LSE), in the archives collections of Glasgow Archives, Manchester Archives, The National Library of Scotland (in Edinburgh) and West Yorkshire Archives (Wakefield), although some are found in other scattered collections.²⁹ Many consist of only a few brief financial statements, and the dozen or so collections of minutes that survive usually cover only a few years and are for a random collection of branches such as Bilston, Bo'ness, Edinburgh Central, Ilford, Shettleston, Southall, Manchester Central, and West Bromwich. These are the paltry, fragmentary and random remains of more than 1,000 branches of the ILP that existed at various times in the inter-war years.

The ILP collection in the British Library of Political and Economic Science, which constitutes more than a third of the surviving ILP branch and regional material listed by the National Register, is both intriguing and inviting, demonstrating the range of issues which local members wove into the fabric of their culture. It contains the Head Office circulars from 1919 to 1939, which indicates the extent to which local branches were being drawn into the discussion of the national politics of the party on such issues as participation in the Vienna Union, an international organisation in the early 1920s which aimed to unite both the

Second International and the Third International (or Communist International or Comintern), in what Richard Collingham Wallhead, ILP and Labour MP for Merthyr from 1922 until his death in 1934, referred to as an 'all-Inclusive interest'. These circulars also deal with the way in which the whole party was involved in the development of the guild socialist ILP Constitution of 1922, the local selection of parliamentary candidates, 'Poplarism' in London, the divisive nature of 'Socialism in Our Time', Disaffiliation' and other contentious issues. Indeed, they also provide an entry into the culture of the ILP, providing details on such developments as the Northampton ILP Boot Society, a co-operative subsidiary to the Northampton ILP organised by boot makers, and details about the ILP Cinema at Morley Street in Bradford and divisional summer school conferences. The Ilford ILP minute books deal with the raising of money to purchase a Labour Hall in its minutes of February 1924.³⁰ They also record a lecture given by George Lansbury in connection with the Fellowship of Reconciliation in 1919, which indicates the intention of local branches on the extent of international matters.³¹ The London and Southern Counties Divisional Council Minutes (1927–8) particularly emphasise the need to create factory groups to 'develop Party influence in the workplace', perhaps in response to a similar development being undertaken by the communist party at this time.³² In both 1927 and 1928 it was concerned that branches such as Hackney were still associated with constituency Labour Party branches which had been ejected from the Labour Party because of communist connections, and one of its reports, of 25 May 1927, suggested that ILP branches should 'keep clear of Labour Party squabbles and not allow difficulties among them to interfere with our work'. In 1933, the Hackney branch was deeply involved with the London District of the CPGB in holding meetings to organise 'a great campaign to build the united front of London workers in support of the German workers' fight against Fascism, against war and the attack of the National Government, on the standards of the working class'. This goes beyond the attempt at forging a 'United Front against Fascism' and offers a new dimension to the study of ILP and CPGB relations at the local and regional levels in a detailed report of the negotiations between the two London divisional and district organisations of the two parties on 23 March 1933. The London ILP Division normally contained five or six federations which also reported on their own social and political activities. On 14 August 1932 the Shettleston ILP (on the Glasgow East side) greeted, with acclamation, the report on the Bradford Conference which had led to the disaffiliation of the ILP from the Labour Party, though many other branches took the opposite view.³³

Clearly, there is a rich seam of, admittedly fragmented, evidence about the attitudes of the rank and file to the national developments within the ILP. The Halifax ILP minute books (1923–1953) indicate an obsession with maintaining the viability of the Socialist Hall.³⁴ These can be further supplemented by the records of the RPC, which are to be found in the Communist Archives in the People's History Museum in Manchester, which reflect upon the 1930s negotiations between the ILP and the CPGB, and upon communist activity within the ILP, although they are extensively covered in pamphlets published by the ILP.

There are also numerous other collections of papers relevant to the topic, including the Clifford Allen Papers at the University of South Carolina at Columbia in South Carolina (which was not directly consulted); the Richard Rees papers at the University College, London; the Jimmy Maxton Papers at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow; the Patrick Dollan and Jack Gibson Collection of Glasgow University Library; the Jock Haston Papers at the Brynmor Library of the University of Hull; the Frank Bunnell and David Gibson Papers at the Imperial War Museum; as well as various papers of value at the National Archives.³⁵ Apart from the Edinburgh Central ILP Papers 1911–1934, which more or less end in 1922, the National Library of Scotland holds the papers of prominent ILP figures such as Emrys Hughes, Arthur Woodburn and David Murray. The Francis Johnson Collection of ILP correspondence at the British Library of Political and Economic Science (at the London School of Economics) provides insight into the attitudes of ILP leaders, at a library which also includes the NAC minutes and records of the ILP. In other words, there is a plethora of material, much of which has not been used, except briefly, in narrowly focused studies.

Certainly, most of the local materials, except that for the Clydeside area, have barely been touched beyond the occasional reference to give local colour to national studies. In addition, many of the surviving papers of the national ILP were deposited at the Working Class Movement Library in Salford, along with many pamphlets (referred to in the Bibliography); the spare copies of some of these have also been deposited in the Heritage Quay, the archive of the University of Huddersfield. Part of the purpose of this book is to examine a wide variety of local and national sources and to link their stories with the more obvious (though often rarely used) collections of material in The National Archives (TNA), such as the KV special branch material on Fenner Brockway, and other political figures, and the records of parliamentary debates, our Party in the 1930s?

The Times, and many other national newspapers, of course, reported on the major events in ILP history, which contended with other major events for news space, and often commented on the ILP with a sense of bafflement. Much more central to the ILP's history was its own paper, the *Labour Leader*, which became the *New Leader* in 1923, and later, other journals such as *Controversy*, *Left*, *The Internationalist* and *Between Ourselves*, that encouraged discussion within the Party. To these might be added the *Bradford Pioneer*, which published between 1913 and 1935, at various times under the editorship of Fred Jowett, Willie Leach and, towards the end, Franks Betts, the father of Barbara Betts (later Castle), and the *Dewsbury Citizen*. In Lancashire the main organ was *Labour's Northern Voice*, whilst in London it was *Revolt* that reflected ILP thinking, and in Scotland there was the *Scots New Leader* and the widely read Glasgow *Forward*, edited by Emrys Hughes, and the Edinburgh paper, *The Labour Standard*, which, whilst acting as the organ of the whole Labour movement in Edinburgh was very largely focused upon ILP activity, especially during the Great War.

Debates and questions

Debates revolving around the history, growth and decline of the ILP between 1914 and 1939 have largely focused upon four major themes or questions. The first has been the ILP's brief loss of support in the Great War, when it was perceived to be a pacifist organisation opposing all wars. Yet, to what extent was the ILP a pacifist organisation, and how far was this responsible for its changing political position between 1914 and 1918? To many authors, including Cyril Pearce, the ILP, with the British Socialist Party (BSP) was the engine of pacifism which combined with Quaker, Liberal progressive, and trade union opposition to oppose the war. However, to Tony Jowitt and Keith Laybourn, this was a myth sedulously circulated by the right-wing press to damn a party whose members in the ILP hotspots of Bradford, and other areas, as a proportion of their numbers, volunteered in large numbers for the voluntary Derby Scheme before military conscription was introduced in January 1916.³⁶ Indeed, Marcus Morris has recently suggested that the pro-war and the anti-war socialists within the ILP and the wider socialist and Labour movement were largely committed to both peace and an Allied victory on the basis of maintaining Britain's democratic tradition, much as Paul Ward argued in his book in the late 1990s.³⁷ The end of the Great War also saw the ILP challenged by the Labour Party's new 1918 constitution, which contained the socialist clause 3d, which committed the Labour Party to public ownership. As a caveat to the issue of war and peace, was it the Labour Party's new constitution that filched the role of the ILP as a socialist godparent to the Labour Party and ensured its future as an increasingly diminishing force within Labour politics?

Secondly, Dowse and Marwick have placed enormous emphasis on ILP's post-war revival from 1918 onwards, but particularly after 1922, when it convinced itself of the need to continue as a defender of social democracy under the leadership of Clifford Allen and with a commitment to guild socialism. However, despite this development, it is clear that the internationalism of Allen clashed with the domestic-community approach of many ILP branches and particularly those in the Glasgow Clydeside. What then allowed the Clydesiders to prevail in turning a growing internationalist socialist group into a more narrowly nationally focused sectarian body? Indeed, does the parochial, working-class and community approach of Clydeside partly explain the declining appeal of the ILP from the mid-1920s onwards?

Thirdly, there is the dominating question of why did the ILP disaffiliate from the Labour Party in 1932? Was it, as I have previously argued, because of the growing conflict between the ILP and the Labour Party resulting from the slow pace of social change towards socialism in Britain?³⁸ Alternatively was it because of the rising debate over its policy of 'Socialism in Our Time' and 'The Living Wage', which was seen as both an irrational and contradictory document by many in the Labour Party? Were these tensions simply provoked by the demand that ILP MPs should follow the Labour Party line, by observing the Labour Party's new Standing Orders of 1929, particularly after the defeat of the Labour government?

Alternatively, was disaffiliation the product of a considered and long-thought-out, coherent, logical and reasoned debate, which Gidon Cohen feels it to have been on the basis of a lengthy discussion which culminated in the Special Conference at Bradford on 30 and 31 July 1932?³⁹ In what respect, then, was disaffiliation the product of the fact that many ILPers realised that a permanent state of socialism was not possible under the parliamentary system of democracy and elected local government, which the Labour Party endorsed?

Fourthly, there is the final question of what did the ILP feel that it was offering to the British people by operating outside the Labour Party in the 1930s? For Cohen the ILP offered a grand dream of the imminence of socialism that made it as important as the communist party, and other socialist parties, as it appealed to different identities that had helped to create it.⁴⁰ Yet, to Cohen, the factionalism, poor organisation and divisions over policy ensured that to some extent 'the ILP was the architect of its own decline'.⁴¹ In other words, it offered a realistic vision of what was possible but one that was destroyed by internal conflict in the 1930s. This contrasts with the views of other historians, most markedly Dowse, Middlemass, and McKinley and Morris, who saw the disaffiliation as a fatal blow to the ILP, which may have been considered to be 'suicide during a fit of insanity', and that because 'they had very little political power the main history of the ILP should end in 1932'.⁴² Therefore, is disaffiliation in 1932 the realistic end of the ILP, or did it have political resonance after that date?

Vital to an examination of these debates are the views of the grass roots membership of the ILP. It is easy to establish why many left, but why did some stay throughout all its tribulations from 1914 onwards? Perhaps it was its identity with the past as a formative influence upon Labour politics. Possibly, as Ian Bullock argues, it retained the reputation of being the true defender of social democracy.⁴³ It is also possible that the ILP was sustained in its decline by a core of ILP supporters committed to living the life of a socialist as they saw it in the way William Morris had advocated in the 1880s and 1890s, offering a form of democratic localism in the face of the centralisation of the Labour Party, making more of moment than form.

The book, the methodology and the argument

The ILP's inter-war history demands an analysis that seeks to integrate the experience of the ILPer at the grass roots level with the events at the national level. This book seeks to do this and to provide a clearer picture of what the ILP stood for and why the ILP survived locally, with vibrancy in some areas, from the late 1920s onwards when political decisions at the national level seemed to determine its rapid demise in national, regional and local politics where it had once had a dominating presence.

It offers a comparative historical analysis of primary evidence that attempts to place the grass roots of the ILP, where possible, alongside the national developments. It therefore necessitates the use of two methodological approaches. First, it examines the surviving national records of the ILP, many of them now lodged

at the British Library of Political and Economic Science, at the London School of Economics, the *Labour Leader* and the *New Leader*, and many of the pamphlets of the ILP that have been mentioned. Secondly, and to a more circumscribed extent limited by the paucity of primary sources, it examines the relatively small number of surviving institutional branch and regional records that are available to establish the local cultural features of ILP development and local reactions to the national events in the history of the ILP. These approaches involve a critique of articles, pamphlets and reports by some of the local ILP activists of the Great War and inter-war years to establish the extent to which they saw themselves living the life of a socialist in the context of the ILP. Indeed, what did it mean to be a member of the ILP in the Great War or in the 1920s and 1930s? What was their intellectual mind-set, mental furniture and their immediate context?

The crux of the argument presented here is that the fragmentation of the ILP over the Great War and the introduction of the new Labour Party Constitution of 1918 effectively undermined the power and influence of the ILP, except in parts of Scotland, the West Riding of Yorkshire, parts of Lancashire, and in areas of London where it retained influence and considerable control over local Labour politics.⁴⁴ At that point, the balance of political power clearly moved away from the ILP to a trade union-dominated Labour Party, and thus labourism, which is why the ILP emphasised its identity as a social democratic party committed to the rapid emergence of socialism and a critic of a Labour Party, hamstrung by a democratic system which would never allow a rapid or permanent move towards a socialist state. In the end this led to policies and campaigns which forced the ILP to advocate guild socialism, to abandon the Labour Party as a force for social democratic change and to flirt with a rather nebulous commitment to revolutionary workers' politics in the 1930s. The ILP may have seen itself as occupying the space between the Labour Party and the communist party, with which it had a tortuous relationship, and was 'Left in the Centre', to use the title of R. E. Dowse's book. Indeed, as Ben Pimlott indicated in his *Left in the Thirties*, the ILP became just one of many left-wing and socialist organisations with a small and rapidly declining membership in the face of the rise of Hitler and continental fascism, being overtaken by the rapidly rising CPGB. Perhaps it was partly the architect of its own decline, but the conditions of British politics meant in the inter-war years, just as much as the 1930s, it held little prospect of success. The NAC was aware of this when, in June 1928, it debated, without any clear outcome the future of the ILP, dividing as it did between those who favoured it continuing as a small, practical party acting as a propaganda group and those favouring it becoming more of an academic think tank. Those who kept the faith drew upon the traditions of the past, the faith in the moment rather than the form, the commitment to living the life of a socialist rather than becoming an electoral machine, even though for some areas the ILP offered new hopes and new identities. It is hard to believe that the ILP could ever expect to operate effectively free from the chains of the Labour Party, or that the Labour Party would ever permit it to pursue the belief in the liberty of conscience that it was seeking in its negotiations with the Labour Party during the inter-war years. The same was true of its political

liaison with the CPGB and the TI. Ultimately, many of its members came to recognise the impossibility of their position, including Fenner Brockway, who finally reflected that disaffiliation was the worst decision of his political career – though a small band of ardent ILP socialists kept the faith in an increasingly sectarian organisation, which was becoming an academic debating society, although a way of life for some, faced with its growing practical and political irrelevance.⁴⁵ Its purity of thought, its atomism and individuality was ill-fitted with the plurality of working-class ideas, thoughts and actions which needed a broader canvas in British society during the inter-war years. In the end, British society and politics changed and broadened; the ILP did not. It failed to change with the times but rather fragmented into isolation and obscurity. Whilst the ILP offered a broad range of socialist solutions to economic problems of the 1930s, and a commitment to individual thought and action, the reality was that the working class voted for conservatism in economics and politics.

Notes

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- 2 R. E. Dowse, *Left in the Centre: The Independent Labour Party in Britain*, London, Longman, 1966, p. 47.
- 3 David Howell, 'Traditions, Myths and Legacies: The ILP and the Labour Left', in Alan McKinlay and R. J. Morris (eds), *The ILP on Clydeside 1893–1932: From Foundation to Disintegration*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1991, p. 208.
- 4 Ian Bullock, *Under Siege: The Independent Labour Party in Interwar Britain*, Edmonton, AU Press, Athabasca University, 2017, pp. 204–5, which also deal with the Marxist-inspired Revolutionary Policy Committee (RPC).
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- 8 Barry Winter, and several other people connected with Independent Labour Publications, raised this prospect at the History Workshop held at Newcastle in 1991, where a commitment to a new Independent Labour Party was raised and vague ideas of policies were put forward. Several of those present, including the late Dr. Len Smith and myself, were sceptical of the proposal.
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- 17 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*.
- 18 Bullock, *Under Siege*.
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1 The Independent Labour Party and the Great War, 1914–1918

Historians have long recognised that the Great War was a crucial moment of change in British political history favouring the political Labour movement. To Arthur Marwick it damaged the Liberal Party and strengthened the Labour Party.¹ For Trevor Wilson it ‘increased the importance of the trade unions and so stimulated their political consciousness that it correspondingly enhanced the position of the Labour Party’.² Yet despite such developments, it also led to divisions between the pro-war and anti-war supporters within the ranks of the Labour Party and the trade unions, and greatly weakened the position of the ILP, the intellectual godparent of the Labour Party, especially as the Labour Party became a socialist party. Indeed, much has been made of the differences between the pro-war Labour Party and the anti-war ILP leading to a departure of many ILPers to the Labour Party, though this is to accept that the ILP members were largely pacifist.

Indeed, R. E. Dowse has argued, of the wartime ILP, that ‘Factionalism, the bane of the Left which had plagued the party before the war, ceased almost completely’, adding that ‘James Parker, MP. J. R. Clynes, MP, and Harry Dubery [Duberry], a member of the NAC’, who totally opposed the ILP’s policy of pacifism’, were old stalwarts whose opposition left them without influence in the party.³ Such was the agreement on the need for peace, he adds, that ‘Despite this range of opinion within the ILP [having identified at least four strands] the differences rarely broke to the surface’.⁴ Yet such equanimity within the ILP was simply not the case, for at the outbreak of the war the majority of Labour members and many of those affiliated to the ILP, perhaps even the majority, were pro-war or in favour of an Allied victory, even if they also wanted an early peace agreement. Indeed, Paul Ward has suggested that ‘the anti-war left was a small proportion of the left, and only a tiny minority when compared with the population as a whole’. And it would appear that most ILP members, including Ramsay MacDonald, wanted the Great War’s successful conclusion for all the Allies despite criticising the conduct of the war.⁵ Also, despite the fact that the ILP Annual Easter Conference of 1915 passed a resolution opposing war, many ILP members were, at the outbreak of war, willing to fight, attesting under the Derby Scheme. There were, indeed, marked differences of opinion within the ILP over the issue of peace and war.

Both Paul Ward and Marcus Morris have, nevertheless, noted that despite the divergent attitudes of ILP members on the Great War, there was more unity than

division between the so-called pro-war and anti-war sections of the Labour movement. To them, both groupings wanted peace even if some of the leaders, like Robert Blatchford (Clarion Movement) and Henry Mayers Hyndman, leader of the British Socialist Party (BSP), wanted to negotiate peace from a position of strength rather than equality, claiming there was no such thing as an anti-war party but only a party of defence.⁶ Morris, in particular, suggests that having been divided between 1914 and 1916, the ILP became more united in a common cause to support Conscientious Objectors (COs), the Peace Campaign, the Women's Peace Crusade, and the move to 'Hail the Russian Revolution' at the Leeds Conference in June 1917. The decline of the ILP membership between 1914 and the beginning of 1917 was then reversed in the 'anti-war hotspots' of the West Riding of Yorkshire and markedly so in Glasgow and the Clydeside, which was thrust forward as a new centre of ILP activity. This change may have been partly influenced by the Munitions Act of 1915, denying workers the freedom to move from job to job without a leaving certificate from their employer. The introduction of the Military Conscription Act of January 1916, and the work of the War Emergency: Workers' National Committee (WEWNC) – an organisation of about 100 Labour and socialist bodies – in demanding the 'conscription of riches' if the nation could demand the 'conscription of life', and advocating public ownership of wealth and the defence of civil liberties may have been another unifying factor. Indeed, in common with the Labour Party, many ILP branches, including those in Glasgow and London, had supported the actions of the WEWNC in protesting at the rise in prices of consumer products and rents; the Glasgow ILP branches becoming involved in the Glasgow rent strikes and the City of London ILP expressing concern, also, for the treatment of the wives of soldiers and sailors.⁷ Nonetheless, the revived ILP of 1917 faced a serious challenge to its omnipotent position as the leading social democratic party by the fact that the Labour Party introduced its new socialist constitution, with its commitment to Clause Four (3d) and public ownership of the means of production.

In the final analysis, there are three main questions about the impact of the Great War on the ILP. Firstly, what was the attitude of its members to the Great War? Secondly, how did this affect the ILP? Thirdly, how did changes in the Labour Party affect its position within the political Labour movement? The evidence presented here suggests that the ILP was inaccurately presented as a pacifist, or peace, party, that it lost membership but recovered under a widely based national Peace Campaign, but found that its prominence as the primary democratic socialist party in Britain was challenged and undermined by the Labour Party adopting a socialist constitution in 1918.

The ILP, its leaders and the Great War

On the eve of war, the ILP was the most successful socialist party in Britain, with 40,000 members, organised into nine divisions with 750 branches, though dominated by the Yorkshire and London branches (Appendix 1), and run nationally by the National Administrative Committee (NAC). The NAC was composed of the

usual executive members (such as Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer) elected at conference, along with nine divisional representatives, and had a total membership of 16. In 1914 the ILP's leading figures were James Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden and J. Bruce Glasier, the 'Big Four', who were supported by powerful regional and national figures, such as Fred Jowett and William Leach of Bradford, and E. J. Sandham of Lancashire. All were prominent and powerful figures from the pre-war ILP, usually both within their local area and in the national Labour Party, and eight were MPs sponsored by the ILP: W. C. Anderson (Sheffield Attercliffe), J. R. Clynes (Manchester North-East), James Keir Hardie (Merthyr Tydfil), Fred Jowett (Bradford West), George Lansbury (Bow & Bromley), James Ramsay MacDonald (Leicester), Thomas Richardson (Whitehaven), and Philip Snowden (Blackburn), forming an important rump in the Labour Party's 42 MPs who had been returned in December 1910. However, from the start the leaders of the ILP were divided on the war in a way in which the leaders of the Labour Party, and Arthur Henderson, were not. Whilst they, and the ILP, were opposed to war per se, the leading figures in the ILP were often ambiguous in their attitude to it in a way which made it seem out of tune with the wartime nationalism that prevailed.

When war broke out, Hardie, MP for Merthyr Tydfil, and Jowett, the ILP and Labour MP for Bradford West, driven on by a belief in individual conscience, honoured both those who opposed the war and those who felt compelled to fight. In August 1914 Hardie said that 'the lads who have gone forth to fight their country's battles must not be disheartened by any discordant notes at home'.⁸ In December 1914 he was wanting all those who were fighting to come back safely, though he exclaimed 'But I cannot become a recruiting agent'.⁹ At the beginning of January 1915, Hardie also declared that the position of the NAC of the ILP was one of 'complete neutrality'.¹⁰ Later, in his famous article, 'We must see the war through, but denounce secret diplomacy', he paid homage to those giving their lives in the war, defended those who opposed it, and denounced the secret treaties that had led to it.¹¹ Jowett's views, like those of Hardie, appeared equally ambiguous given that the Annual ILP Conference at Norwich in the Easter of 1915, supported peace, and especially so since he wished to see the war speedily concluded in favour of the Allies. In his Chairman's speech to the 1915 Conference he stated that 'Now is the time to speak and ensure that never again shall the witches cauldron of secret diplomacy brew the war broth of Hell for mankind'.¹² He was far more explicit at the ILP Conference of 1916, where, in his Chairman's speech, he reminded one critic that

The ILP resolution to which you refer [the one approved at the 1915 Conference] expressed the view that Socialist parties as organised bodies should support no war. It did not attempt to lay down such a policy for individuals. If it did I should be opposed to it in principle.¹³

Such a fine distinction between the actions of individuals within the ILP and the policy of the Party was confusing to many of those whom the ILP permitted, with

Jowett's sympathies, to both support and oppose the war in different guises – although Philip Snowden, ILP and Labour Party MP for Blackburn, did suggest that this was no different from individuals opposing a war which the state had entered into without prior consultation.¹⁴

James Ramsay MacDonald, rather like Jowett and Hardie, was also opposed to the secret treaties that had led to war. Indeed, MacDonald resigned as Chairman of the Labour Party when the Executive Committee of the Labour Party decided to support the Asquith government's pursuit of the war on 5 August 1914 by agreeing to the measure to raise £100 million war credits whilst still objecting to the secret treaties that had led to war. His objection was to the secret treaties, though he stated in the *Leicester Pioneer* that 'Prussian militarism must be broken and the Russian people freed'.¹⁵ Many years later Emanuel Shinwell reflected that 'He [Hardie] was neither for nor against it. In speaking his audiences heard a man who loathed past wars, regarded future wars with abhorrence, but carefully evaded giving his opinion on the basic question of the present one'.¹⁶ Nevertheless, as a result of resigning from the chairmanship of the Labour Party, MacDonald became more involved the ILP and a group of anti-war radicals on the left-wing of the Liberal Party – most notably Philip Morrell, Norman Angell, Charles Trevelyan, E. D. Morel, Arthur Ponsonby and Sir John Simon. On 10 August 1914, this group decided to form a 'committee to voice their views'.¹⁷ On 17 November this committee officially became the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) committed to the implementation of four 'Cardinal Points'. These were that at the end of the war no treaty was to be entered into by the British government without the consent of Parliament; no province was to be transferred from one country to another without the consent of the population; British foreign policy was not to be aimed at the maintaining of a balance of power but at setting up an international council for securing peace; and, as part of the peace agreement, there should be a drastic disarmament of the powers and the arms industries should be nationalised.¹⁸ In essence the UDC offered a beguiling vision of democratic forces working openly, rather than politicians working secretly, running foreign affairs. This appealed to many members of the ILP and became its policy. MacDonald supported the UDC aims and, like many of its members, later joined the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) formed in 1915, with obvious objectives. Ironically, whilst active in the ILP and less prominent in the Labour Party, MacDonald was increasingly drawn to creating a new, socialist constitution for the Labour Party that would distinguish it from the Liberal Party, whose progressive policies were little different from those of Labour, but also paving the way to challenge the claim that the ILP was the only socialist party in Britain committed to parliamentary democracy.

Only a small portion of the leading figures of the ILP were, thus, absolute pacifists, or near to being so. However, this group included Philip Snowden, Clifford Allen, J. Bruce Glasier, Dr. Alfred Salter (of Bermondsey), Willie Leach (of Bradford) and Fenner Brockway; Allen and Brockway were later to be incarcerated in Dartmoor and Wormwood Scrubs as COs because of their absolutist position and refusal to be conscripted, though Allen was eventually moved to Winchester

Prison.¹⁹ This small group would have agreed with the sentiments expressed by Willie Leach, in an editorial about his views, in the *Bradford Pioneer* in June 1916:

We hate all war, especially the present one. This is a pacifist or peace journal conducted, among other purposes, with the object of stating as well as we can, the ILP position on the hideous tragedy now being enacted in Europe. . . . Human life is the most sacred thing we know and its preservation, its development, its best welfare, must therefore be the religion on this earth.²⁰

Of the Big Four, Hardie and MacDonald were largely opposed to the secret treaties that led to the war, and Hardie's place on this issue was taken over by Jowett upon Hardie's death on 26 September 1915. J. B. Glasier was also effectively a pacifist, although he had written in 1906 that 'patriotism . . . has been an essential element in civilisation and thus was an essential element in socialism'.²¹ Snowden, who was to become, arguably, the most significant figure in the war-time ILP, had been away on a tour of Canada, the United States and New Zealand, but on his return to his Blackburn constituency in February 1915, he spoke to 2,000 people at the Prince's Theatre declaring that 'he had never been prouder of the ILP'.²² He complained of British foreign policy, the armaments ring which included the firms of Krupps and Vickers, but still left the matter of volunteering for the army to individual conscience. Unlike Hardie, he did not participate in the recruiting campaign, informing the Mayor of Blackburn that 'I refuse to ask any young man to sacrifice his life for me',²³ adding that

I am not going to ask any young man to do something for me which I am not able to do myself. The consequences are so serious that I believe the decision should be left entirely to individual conscience. If a man thinks it is wrong to go, he ought not to be prosecuted. If a man thinks he ought to go, then he ought to go and I honour that man.

Because of Snowden's concern for individual conscience, he quickly gravitated towards a pacifist position, although he never claimed to be an absolute pacifist. Indeed, in the pre-war years Snowden had been convinced of the absolute necessity 'for the defence of our shore', and later claimed that he had never taken up the attitude of the extreme pacifists who object to war in all possible circumstances'.²⁴ Indeed, like many of the leading ILP opponents of war in the autumn of 1915, he argued of the ILP that 'We have never advocated a policy of Stop the War because we realise that when two combatants are fighting the fight must go on until one is vanquished or both are willing to stop'.²⁵ This was rather disingenuous given the Annual ILP Conference decision of 1915 to oppose the war, but not out of line with the tone of many other socialist opponents of war who were prepared to see it to a conclusion and a lasting peace. Nevertheless, he was broadly pacifist in approach and, returning to the NAC of the ILP in 1915, acted with a small group of ILP stalwarts who strongly opposed the war. In the

process he, and they, alienated the mainstream of trade union and Labour Party opinion, and he amplified the differences by his personal attacks upon some trade union patriots who dominated both the trade unions and the Labour Party throughout the war. Indeed, Snowden made a broad sweep attack 'against the tyranny of the massed vote of the great industrial organisations in the Labour Party whom he considered to be responsible for the apparent continuation of the patriotic and right-wing attitudes throughout the war'.²⁶ However, he reserved his most vitriolic attack for Will Thorne, who had been a champion of militant action and left-wing causes before the war and was now leading the large General Workers' Union and was also Labour MP for West Ham. In the war, Thorne acquired the uniform of a lieutenant-colonel in the West Ham Volunteers and a fur coat as a gift from F. E. Smith, Lord Birkenhead. These adornments, and Thorne's support for the war and for military conscription, made him a target of opposition within his own union and particularly from Snowden, who referred to his 'unlettered ignorance and unfitness for Parliament'.²⁷ Yet such attacks served to further isolate the ILP from the trade unions and, in the case of Thorne's, back-fired for having broken down on the platform of the union Biennial Conference, Thorne recounted that the whole audience 'rose *en masse* and cheered and sang until I recovered myself'.²⁸

In 1915, after a self-imposed exile from office for six years, resulting from Victor Grayson's attack upon the ILP leadership at the 1909 Annual ILP Conference, Snowden allowed himself to be re-elected to the NAC of the ILP at the Conference, and though he was criticised for his silence on the peace resolution, he revealed that 'his silence was a sign of agreement'.²⁹ He also became one of the regular contributors to the *Labour Leader*, the newspaper of the ILP, writing at length for most editions throughout 1915 and 1916. That he was quickly absorbed into propaganda work was suggested in a letter to J. Bruce Glasier, then editor in October 1915: 'You have given me little time for the article you want. When is the latest that will do? I always write things at the latest date. I am full up every moment of time during the coming week'.³⁰ Almost a year later, in September 1916, he became the regular writer for the *Labour Leader*'s 'Review of the Week' column, which was then switched from the second page to the front page. He continued to write that column until March 1919.

One senses that Snowden was rising to the political challenge of war and the opportunities it provided. He was at the top of the NAC poll at the 1916 ILP Conference and hurrying towards the chairmanship of the ILP, which he occupied from April 1917 to April 1920, in the process replacing Fred Jowett who had been the erstwhile chairman from 1914 to 1917. Indeed, the way was now open for his assumption of control of the direction of the ILP. Keir Hardie had died in September 1915, Bruce Glasier was ill and not inclined to lead, and the varied interests of Ramsay MacDonald reduced his impact on the centre stage of ILP politics. Now Snowden was the only one of the pre-war Big Four with the desire, time and commitment to take charge of the ILP's activities of the Peace Campaign, although he operated with the nationally important and locally (in the West Riding) dominant

Jowett. Jowett and Snowden, who between them acted as chairman of the ILP from 1914 to 1920, were the dominant figures in the ILP at a time when British politics was changing and challenging the established order of values, policies and structure of society.

Challenge and change in the Great Wars

Dominated by Jowett and Snowden, the ILP faced three major problems that would shape its future. First of all, it was divided on the Great War, which initially lost it much trade union support. It was institutionally opposed to the war, as evidenced by the views of its leaders and the decision of the 1915 Annual Conference, and also the fact that it came to the fore in its support of COs after the introduction of military conscription in January 1916. Indeed, it became a leading force in the Peace Campaign of 1917. These actions led to the ILP and Snowden being presented as treacherous supporters of the nation's enemies and lost it much trade union support to the Labour Party. Snowden fostered the impression of the ILP as a pacifist party, whilst Jowett attempted to dispel this illusion by indicating that in Bradford more ILP men, as a proportion of the party, attested under the voluntary Derby Scheme, where men volunteered their services for military action, if required, than did the eligible male members of any other political party in Bradford. This was the case in 'pacifist Bradford', as will become evident later, and even the case in Huddersfield, which Cyril Pearce has dubbed a 'community of conscience' because of the number of COs it produced in a town that was apparently overwhelmingly sympathetic towards pacifists.³¹ However, such facts, as will be noted later, carried little weight and the impression of the ILP and its associated organisations as anti-war views predominated. The Clarion Movement, the cultural movement of ethical socialism to which many ILP members belonged, emphasised brotherhood and fellowship and was seen as anti-war, even though it was divided on the issue. Whilst the majority of its members opposed the Great War, Robert Blatchford, its founder, wrote his anti-German book, *General von Sneak: A little study of war*, and maintained a pro-war position in the Clarion along with Edward Robertshaw Hartley, of Bradford, who was the organiser of the propagandist Clarion Van Movement and a member of the ILP and the BSP.³² It has also been recently argued, by Marcus Morris, that Blatchford, and indeed Henry Hyndman of the quasi-Marxist BSP, whilst labelled as staunch pro-war figures, in fact shared many of the values of internationalism of the rest of the socialist movement, and believed that peace with the Germans could only be achieved from a position of strength; they favoured peace but not at any price. Their approach both to the war and peace were different, but they were united on the need for a negotiated peace.³³ Be that as it may, for the ILP the war was divisive, and the ILP gained the reputation of being a pacifist organisation, one nurtured by its flirtation with the Menshevik, if not the Bolshevik, revolution in Russia in 1917, and its initial support for the Workers' and Soldiers' Council peace conference held at Leeds in June 1917, following the Menshevik Revolution in Russia.

Secondly, the Great War also began the process of changing the locus of ILP strength from West Yorkshire, Lancashire, the Midlands, Leicester and London, where membership fell, to Scotland where the Clydeside ILPers of the 'Red Clyde' in Glasgow developed their strength and numbers. The Glasgow ILP branches probably doubled their membership in the war to about 4,000 in 1918 (with about 10,000 members in the Scottish Division),³⁴ whilst that, for instance in Lancashire, had actually fallen from about 7,100 in 1914 to 5,650 in 1917 before recovering to about 6,650 in 1918.³⁵ Although the agitation of the ILP, and Jimmy Maxton, in the rent strikes in Glasgow is well known, it is clear that it was the industrial struggles between the engineering unions and the government, employers and local authorities that forced labourism to the front to help Labour replace the Liberal Party. At this time, it was, according to James Hinton, the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) and the quasi-Marxist BSP which ran Labour and socialist politics in the Clydeside, though the ILP was always in the background. Yet, Joseph Melling has stressed that growth of ILP influence occurred between the decline of industrial militancy of the Red Clyde, after the disastrous Glasgow 40-hour-a-week strike of 1919 and the Battle of George Square, and the emergence of the Labour Party to dominance in the 1920s.³⁶ The ILP then became the dominant force within the Labour Party in the Clydeside area and within the national ILP. Jimmy Maxton failed to get elected to the NAC of the ILP in April 1916, with Jowett receiving 263 votes and Maxton not being elected with his 55 votes.³⁷ However, in the Scottish Divisional Council Annual Conference held at Govan in early 1917 Maxton was at the top of the poll with 76 votes, with Patrick Dollan and Helen Crawford, two leading local ILPers, well in his wake.³⁸ This success ensured that in 1918, Maxton was on the NAC. Between February 1917 and February 1918 there was an increase of 112 branches in Scotland and an increase of 3,000 members, meaning that there were 167 branches of the ILP in Scotland with its 10,000 members in early 1918; Comrade Campbell, the new organiser for the Scottish ILP Federation was credited with bringing in 2,000 members alone.³⁹ The Partick branch alone was said to have 333 members.⁴⁰ Indeed, throughout the inter-war years, Divisional area 1, Scotland, normally had the largest membership and number of branches, even when the movement declined in the 1930s, followed by London and the South (Division 6), Lancashire (Division 9) and then Yorkshire (Division 3).⁴¹ The balance of power within the ILP was changing rapidly as a result of the war.

Thirdly, the wartime period also challenged the ILP's position within the British Left, largely because the Labour Party Constitution of 1918, possibly shaped by its experience of working with the WEWNC, with its emphasis upon public ownership and the work of Ramsay MacDonald, undermined the ILP's credentials as the predominant socialist force within the Labour movement by committing the Labour Party to socialism through control of the means of production.⁴² Nevertheless, the move of the Labour Party, via its involvement with the WEWNC, to a socialist constitution produced considerable heart-searching within ILP ranks, during and after the war, about whether or not to dissolve into the Labour Party or to remain independent during the early inter-war years.

The immediate impact of the Great War on the ILP: pro-war or anti-war

The outbreak of war in August 1914 had come with startling suddenness, despite the fact that there had been considerable pre-war opposition to the rising threat of war. Reverend R. Roberts, a Congregational Minister in Bradford and a leading member of the ILP, was not untypical of many ILPers when he expressed his moral outrage against a threatened war in early 1914:

Alone amongst the parties of Great Britain the Labour Party is pledged against militarism. . . . We must take up the Fiery Cross and carry it to the remotest hamlet in the country, call every man and woman to the colours. ‘Down with militarism’. That is our cry – as it is also the cry of our comrades all over Europe. Blazon it on the banners. Write it on the pavements. Sing it in the streets.⁴³

As late as 1 August 1914, the British and Continental socialist leaders were still convinced that war was not a possibility. However, as Georges Haupt suggests, they were captives of their own myths about their ability to prevent war and unaware of the depths of national chauvinism.⁴⁴ They were then cut short by the events, pushed on the defensive and became disorientated spectators, waiting to be submerged by the gathering wave of nationalism.

Even before war broke out, the ILP, Hardie and Jowett were attacking the ‘secret treaties’ that were leading to war. In the July crisis of 1914, Jowett, who was then the ILP and Labour MP for Bradford, wrote in the *Bradford Pioneer* that ‘what Sir Edward Grey and others cannot prove nowadays, is that the secret tortuous ways of old-fashioned diplomatists really succeed in the long run’.⁴⁵ The war was to prove his point and his lifelong political ambition; his fad was to see the control of government, and government departments, by Committee rather than Cabinet and, in the immediate context of war, felt that this was particularly necessary in the operation of foreign policy.⁴⁶ To Jowett, Committee rule was necessary to ensure that parliamentary democracy worked by making the executive accountable to their constituents.⁴⁷ In 1917, he helped set up an ILP committee composed of members who supported both the Committee and Cabinet approaches, to examine how to establish greater public control of government and to ensure that MPs would have greater freedom over their own votes, but it failed to have any impact. Yet the issue kept reoccurring in ILP politics and was discussed by Jowett at the ILP Conference of 1919, in his Edinburgh address to the Labour Party Conference in 1922, and at the ILP Conference in 1923, and was partly the basis of his opposition to the ‘revolutionary policy’ of the ILP in the Disaffiliation Crisis of 1932.

Whilst there was some strong ILP opposition to the war, and the secret treaties that led to it, it is clearly the case that its leading figures and rank and file members were divided between various pro-war and anti-war positions. There were at least three groups, a spectrum ranging from pacifists to patriots. The pacifists included Clifford Allen, J. Bruce Glasier, Dr. Alfred Salter, Fenner Brockway,

and, on the fringe as already outlined, Philip Snowden.⁴⁸ Others, such as Jowett and MacDonald, were driven by a concern about the secret treaties that had led to war. Yet others felt that the need to prosecute the war was essential to the defence of the country and temporarily transcended socialist objectives. Joseph Burgess, the socialist newspaper editor who had called the meeting that led to the formation of the ILP in Bradford in 1893, and Edward Robertshaw Hartley, a prominent figure in the Bradford ILP, both felt that Prussianism was the real danger to the world. This diversity of opinion was clearly well represented in Bradford, an alleged ‘hotbed’ of ILP pacifism.

War and the Labour movement in Bradford: pacifist, anti-war and pro-war views before and after military conscription in 1916: a microcosm of the tensions within a local ILP

Bradford was the birthplace of the ILP, for it was here that the national ILP was formed in January 1893. It was also here where a Workers’ Municipal Federation (WMF) was formed at the turn of the century to establish a Labour presence on the local city council, linking the ILP and the Labour Party with the Bradford Trades and Labour Council (BTLC) which pressed to establish it. By 1913 the ILP/Labour/WMF group were receiving 43.1 per cent of the municipal vote, though their political ambitions were checked by a Conservative-Liberal anti-socialist alliance and had one of Bradford’s three MPs – Fred Jowett, who was returned for Bradford West in 1906.⁴⁹ It was at St. George’s Hall in Bradford (the birthplace of the national ILP) that the 21st ‘Coming of Age’ Conference of the ILP was held in April 1914. Bradford was probably the major centre of ILP activity and influence.

Between 1912 and 1914 there were many articles in the *Bradford Pioneer*, the local Independent Labour Party newspaper, representing the views of the burgeoning Bradford Labour movement on the Armaments Trust, the secret diplomacy, and the need to foster international unity. However, these exhibited a commitment to internationalism rather than steps to stop war. Nevertheless, on the eve of the war, the Bradford Labour movement vehemently expressed its opposition to conflict and called for a simultaneous stoppage of work in those countries where war was threatened. In the midst of a period of national ultimatums, the ILP held a mass meeting on 2 August 1914, the day before hostilities began, which deplored the threatened war but did not advocate immediate working-class action to avoid it. In his speech to this meeting, Jowett, the ILP MP for Bradford West and once a prominent member of the Trades Council, spoke of the need to bring peace through a common socialism and quoted from Bradford Trades Council’s anti-war resolution of 1912

of the proposal for a general stoppage of work in all countries about to engage in war, and further we urge upon all workers the necessity for making preparations for a simultaneous stoppage of work in those countries where war is threatened.⁵⁰

Jowett argued that war was ‘a crime against humanity’ but made no calls for strikes or mass demonstrations to oppose war. Rather he closed his speech with a note of resignation: ‘Let us who are socialists keep in our minds calm, our hearts free from hate, and one purpose always before us – to bring peace as soon as possible on a basis that will endure’.⁵¹

Such sentiments became rarer after war was declared. Very quickly both the ethical and trade union elements of the Bradford Labour Party divided into anti-war and pro-war factions within the ILP, which dominated the local Labour Party. The impression was given by the local, as well as national, press that the ILP, in particular, was opposed to war and unpatriotic. Indeed, shortly after the ILP Conference of 1915 had passed a resolution opposing war, the *Bradford Weekly Telegraph* wrote of the ILP’s inability to ‘raise a single finger to help the country to prosecute the war successfully’. Jowett replied to this by stating that ‘In proportion to its membership the ILP had more adherents serving in the army and navy by far than either of the other two political parties’.⁵² Nonetheless, the Conservative *Bradford Weekly Telegraph* continued its criticism in July 1915 and stated that

Considering how bravely our manhood is serving the state of Flanders, if these demagogues [in the ILP] lack the spine to fight the least they should do would be to remain silent and inactive whilst others do the nation’s work.⁵³

However, local censuses of the Bradford ILP membership confirm that Jowett was right. One conducted in February 1916 indicated that of 461 young men from the Bradford ILP party membership of 1,473, 113 were in the trenches, four had been killed, one was missing, nine had been wounded, three were prisoners of war, 118 were training in England, six were in the navy and 207 were attested under the Derby Scheme as necessary home workers.⁵⁴ Only 12 young men of the Bradford ILP were not committed to the fighting in some way or another. Another census, in 1918, found that of the 492 members liable to service, 351 were serving in the forces whilst 48 were COs or in national work.⁵⁵

The impression that the Bradford ILP was a party of pacifists was simply untrue, an illusion created by a press which failed to appreciate that the ILP allowed freedom of individual liberty of conscience and was equivocal on the war. Jowett himself, as already noted, opposed the war at the same time as he honoured those of the ILP who fought or died in the war. Almost all of the Bradford ILP men of an eligible age fought for their country, although many did so in the hope of winning a lasting post-war peace. Indeed, the *Bradford Pioneer* offered further insight into this relationship between the so-called pacific ILP and the boys at the front by publishing a letter to Jowett from a soldier in France.

Dear Mr. Jowett,

As one of the Boys’ allow me to thank you personally for your efforts for peace during the past four years. I am quite sure that when ‘the Boys’ come home they

will give you the TRUTH, re the terrible wastage of lives, inhuman conditions, filth and immoral environment, and thus you will live in the memories of YOUNG men as being a MAN of whom we can be justly proud. I hope that you will be returned at the head of the poll on the 14th December. [This was a reference to the coming 1918 general election.]

A Boy from France.⁵⁶

Nonetheless, the party did give the impression of being pacifist, which officially it was, despite the fact that most of its members were not so inclined. The main Bradford pacifist was Willie Leach, an employer who had joined the Bradford ILP in 1895 when drawn to do so by Jowett, who had been one of his employees. Leach wrote for *Bradford Labour Echo* (in the mid-1890s) and *Forward* (from about 1900–1906) and took over from the pro-war Joseph Burgess, the man who called the socialists together to form the National ILP in Bradford, as editor of the *Bradford Pioneer*, at the beginning of the war. In October 1915, Leach articulated the paper's policy:

We hate all war especially the present one. This is a pacifist and peace journal conducted among other purposes with the object of stating as well as we can, the ILP position on the hideous tragedy now being enacted in Europe. . . . Human life is the most sacred thing we know and its preservation, its development, its best welfare, must therefore be our religion on this earth.⁵⁷

Led by Leach, the small band of Bradford pacifists saw themselves as a beleaguered group who, through the *Bradford Pioneer*, reported extensively on the UDC and the No-Conscription Fellowship (the NCF having nine branches in Yorkshire by 1916), and the speeches of pacifists and anti-war figures who spoke at the ILP's New Picture House in Morley Street.⁵⁸ It described E. D. Morel, who lectured there as 'that distinguished war bird . . . now a member of the ILP and of the Bradford Branch'.⁵⁹ Leach, through the *Bradford Pioneer*, was also concerned at the attack on the ILP in Bradford, the most Germanised town in Britain with its middle-class families of German origin, such as the Mosers, the Wolffs, the Behrens, the Steinthals and the Delius's.

Leach's pacifist views were supported by a small group of trade unionists and political figures in Bradford, including Walter Barber, Secretary of the Bradford Trades Council, and his son Revis Barber, who became one of the 59 ILP COs in Bradford who refused to be conscripted.⁶⁰ At the end of the war, Leach stood for the parliamentary seat of Bradford Central, where he was comprehensively beaten by the Conservative Coalition candidate. Yet he reiterated his commitment to pacifism:

I have never felt so pugnaciously right in my life. I still disbelieve in war. As long as I am in public life, I will not support bloodshed for any cause, whether that cause appears right or does not. It looks as if this victory fervour

has swept us out. But it will pass. Liberalism is defunct, Socialism is deferred, and the Coalition will be defeated.⁶¹

Such sentiments were clearly not shared by the majority of the Bradford ILP, nor by many contributors to the *Bradford Pioneer*. Dr. Hector Munro, a member of the Bradford ILP, took a medical unit to the Western Front. Also, by the middle of August 1914, the Rev. R. Roberts, who had, two weeks before the outbreak, taken up the 'Fiery Cross' against war, had totally changed his position and was now stating that

the hour of reckoning had come. The legend of 'blood and iron' has to be shattered. Either it must be smashed or civilisation must go under. Its victory would be the enthronement of the War God in the centre of European civilization and the crushing of Socialism for generations. . . . We must realise, and act upon the knowledge, that it is far better to be amongst the victorious than amongst the vanquished and for this reason alone the cry must be 'My Country Right or Wrong'.⁶²

Two months later he added that he had fought for peace for forty years in public life but that

We are threatened with the ruin of civilised society' and that 'At whatever cost of life and treasure we must fight. I cannot tell the pain it cost me to write that sentence. I never thought I should live to do it'. . . . Better to die than be Prussianised. Better to be wiped off the face of the earth than to exist squealing and squirming under the Prussian jack boots.⁶³

There were prominent figures within the ILP who strongly opposed such views, the two leading ones in Bradford were Joseph Burgess and Edward Robertshaw Hartley. Burgess was a newspaper man who had had a long and prominent association with the ILP. It was his newspaper, *The Workman's Times*, which had called together delegates from Labour societies to meet at a conference in Bradford in January 1893, at which the national Independent Labour Party had been formed. He was a member of the Socialist Sunday School movement, editor of the textile workers' *Yorkshire Factory Times*, was later editor of the *Bradford Pioneer* until the summer of 1915 and was elected President of the Bradford ILP in 1915. At first a critic of war, he proclaimed that 'We have no quarrel with Germany. . . . Stand firm workers to those who would appeal to you in the name of patriotism'. However, he changed his position in 1915, joined the Socialist National Defence Committee, which became the National Socialist Party towards the end of 1915, whose motto was 'Britain for the British', a slogan coined by Robert Blatchford in June 1915. In July 1915 Burgess defended his position on the war, arguing that there was a need to defeat Prussianism and thus to defend democracy.⁶⁴ He influenced the Bradford Socialist Sunday School and, in association with the Leeds Armley Socialist School, even attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to overturn the

Yorkshire Union of Socialist Sunday Schools' anti-war position.⁶⁵ There was a flurry of critical letters in the *Bradford Pioneer*, and responses by Burgess in what was dubbed the 'Burgess Comedy'.⁶⁶ Towards the end of 1915, Burgess resigned from the ILP and set up the National Socialist Party (NSP).⁶⁷ Indeed he threatened to stand as a parliamentary candidate for the NSP in Blackburn (against Philip Snowden), though he never did so. He eventually left the Labour movement altogether and moved to Scotland to edit newspapers before making his return to Labour politics in the late 1920s.⁶⁸

Edward Robertshaw Hartley's patriotism was similarly disruptive. He was also a member of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), but its powers were weak in Bradford, rarely having more than about 25 members in the 1890s and swinging in and out of existence, and so also joined the ILP. He was a Bradford City councillor and ILP candidate in East Bradford for the parliamentary seat in 1906 and 1910. He was also a prominent figure in the Clarion Movement and is often seen in photos on the seat of the Van, at the side of his daughter Gertrude, orating to the gathered crowds. Having travelled abroad in 1913, he was, on his return, immediately parachuted into the Dewsbury parliamentary by-election in 1913 for the BSP. The ILP objected to this, but Hartley retained some ILP support in his old Bradford Moor ward. At the beginning of the war, he had adopted a pro-war stance, anticipated the introduction of military conscription and became the pro-war British Workers' League (BWL) in the Bradford area.⁶⁹ At its inaugural meeting at Whetley Lane, Bradford, there were about 1,000 people present, three-quarters of whom, it was reflected, were hostile to his stand.⁷⁰ At the meeting, A. Howarth of the BWL stated of the Bradford ILP and the war, 'Bradford has disgraced itself more than any other town in the country'.⁷¹ Victor Fisher – an old SDF/SDP (German Social Democratic Party)/BSP figure, who had become secretary of the BWL, stated before a Bradford audience that 'Sinister pacifism is more rampant in your midst than in any other part of the United Kingdom with the exception of perhaps the Clyde and South Wales'.⁷²

War and peace: Huddersfield, Colne Valley, the Glasgow 'Red Clyde' and other areas

The charge of ILP pacifism was clearly an exaggeration of the true situation and was mere hyperbole. Indeed, if one examines the situation in other centres of ILP activity, it was clear that some deep divisions existed within the ILP, at least in the early days of the war, though some regions may have been more given to peace than others. It was, for instance, Huddersfield that was seen as the pacifist centre of West Yorkshire (the textile district of the West Riding of Yorkshire). Cyril Pearce has argued that it was actually a 'community of resistance' and a 'community of conscience'.⁷³ If Pearce is right, and pacifist and anti-war ideas were widely accepted by both the Labour movement and the wider community – the Quakers and Nonconformists, the Liberals and the Labour movement – then it seems odd that more than 98 per cent of those young men who were called up went to fight. This, of course, is a wider debate, and the question here is what happened to the Labour movement in Huddersfield, and, in particular, the ILP, whose power and

influence was not as marked as that in Bradford? The local British Socialist Party (BSP) was organised by Arthur Gardiner, who was totally opposed to the war, as was the ILP and the majority of the Labour Party and Huddersfield Trades Council – but perhaps more emphatically, after the introduction of military conscription in 1916 which led to Huddersfield having at least 98 COs, seven of them from ILP ranks, along with nine members of the Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU).⁷⁴

A similar strong pro-peace movement seems to have occurred in the neighbouring Colne Valley. The Colne Valley Socialist (later Labour) League had, influenced by Victor Grayson, its one-time MP and continuing parliamentary constituency candidate, moved from the ILP to the BSP in 1911 and was committed to international socialism, class war and passed a resolution at its Annual Council Meeting in 1916 which stated 'That the Colne Valley Socialist League organise a "Stop the War" campaign throughout the constituency'.⁷⁵ This was a stage in its move towards reuniting with the ILP and the Holmfirth Federation (of the Yorkshire Division of the ILP), and the eventual move towards forming a Divisional Labour Party in the Colne Valley Constituency on 20 January 1917, although this body was not officially formed until 14 April 1917.⁷⁶ The BSP had joined the Labour Party in 1916, but the local BSP, soon after the formation of the Divisional Party, was unhappy with this local arrangement and demanded a vote on leaving the Labour Party. There were clearly complex and involved issues at stake here, but the general attitude of the Colne Valley socialists, of the BSP and the ILP seems to have been anti-war, giving some credence to the arguments of Pearce of the existence of communities of conscience in some areas of the West Riding of Yorkshire.

Yet whilst the Huddersfield ILP and Colne Valley ILP might have been more inclined to oppose the war, even before 1916, this is not at all clear in Glasgow, on the 'Red Clyde'. Here, it was the conflict between the employers and government, on one side, and the protection of trade union rights in the shipyards and engineering works to dilution, by the Shop Stewards, on the other, that has attracted the most attention – class conflict to some and a form of defensive conservatism to others.⁷⁷ The ILP, although it became dominant on Clydeside during the inter-war years, was already a viable political organisation in Glasgow and Scotland, but more attuned to the needs of the urban community rather than the workplace, where it became involved in the impact of war forcing up rents.⁷⁸ When landlords gave notice of rent rises, the ILP organised street corner and hall meetings, women attacked rent collectors with flour, and women ILP activists such as Helen Crawford and Agnes Dollan, and the Co-operative Women's Guild of the ILP, were at the forefront of the opposition.⁷⁹ It was with this 'general campaign of resistance during the autumn of 1915', rather than any initial overt opposition to the war, with which the Glasgow ILP branches most identified.⁸⁰ It was this rent campaign that accounted for much of the growth of ILP membership towards the end of the war, when, as already noted, it increased by 3,000 members and well over 100 branches in one year. This growth was undoubtedly further stimulated by the popular Peace Campaign in 1917 and 1918, though it is clear that the war divided ILP members between those prepared to fight and those wishing for peace. 'Rob Roy' wrote a weekly column in the Glasgow ILP's *Forward*, which indulged

his ‘jingoistic war stand’, despite its own pro-peace stand. Provocatively, though probably accurately for the Glasgow ILP, he wrote that ‘We have never advocated a policy of Stop the War because we realise that when two countries are fighting the fight must go on’.⁸¹ He constantly wrote in favour of socialist participation in the war and criticised the *Labour Leader* for printing the peace policies of the German Democratic Party in September 1918.⁸²

In the surrounding lowland areas of Glasgow, there was also substantial evidence of ILP division over the war. J. Bruce Glasier, touring Scotland in December 1914 and January 1915, declared that ‘all branches sound on the NAC Manifesto on the War’ but that in Bo’ness, two leading councillors, Livingstone and Mair, who were both ‘active members of the branch, favour the Labour Party position as against the ILP’.⁸³ Many years later they were to lead Bo’ness out of the ILP in the 1932 disaffiliation crisis. In October 1916 it was recorded that Lt. Cormack of the Dumbarton ILP had been presented with the Military Cross, and a month later the death of Captain J. O’Connor Kerrick, on the Somme, and that he had been ‘one of our [ILP] ableist propagandists’.⁸⁴

Elsewhere in Britain, those opposing the war were generally a small group who proclaimed the need for internationalism. In Bristol, for instance, only a small group of socialists and ILPers opposed war, and some ILP activists were determinedly pro-war. A. A. Senington of the ILP agreed with his pacifist colleagues on the ‘question of capital and labour’ but supported the idea of the primacy of ‘nation over class’ and that in the current conflict ‘they stood as a nation first’.⁸⁵ A similar situation seems to have occurred in Northampton as well, and in both towns the trade union movement and the trades councils were determinedly nationalist during the conflict.

The picture of the Great War is clear; it divided both ILP leaders and the ILP rank and file members. Indeed, there were deep differences between those who supported peace and those who, in a variety of forms, were pro-war. Yet, as Ward and Morris have suggested, many of those who opposed war wanted a British victory and shared much in common on other issues and policies.⁸⁶ Given that the ILP allowed individual conscience to override the decision of the 1915 ILP Conference to oppose the war, this means that there was less of a problem than might be supposed, even if the ILP lost about a third of its members in the first two years of the war. In the end, the majority of eligible ILP male members volunteered for the war, or accepted conscription, even in areas of strong wartime opposition. Many accepted the fact of war and focused upon defending the rights of the working classes. The balance of opinion, however, began to change from the end of 1915, with military conscription and war weariness reviving the demand for peace, which began to re-unite the pro-war and anti-war sections of the ILP.

Philip Snowden, the ILP, the Munitions Act of 1915 and military conscription

Snowden was now emerging as the leader in a party that officially opposed the war and which, in the words of one historian, ‘created . . . an excellent, almost

religious atmosphere of dedication and solidarity of persecution'.⁸⁷ Consequently, there was a 'more intimate comradeship in the party than in his pre-war days'.⁸⁸ By the end of 1915, Snowden was stressing that 'What we hope for, fight for, and work for was a universal peace amongst nations without distinction of creed, colour or race'.⁸⁹ He quickly won the label of being a left-wing revolutionary, hiding from police raids on his meetings and provoking unrest.⁹⁰ At this stage, he had clearly re-discovered his appetite for ILP and Labour politics. Both inside and outside the House of Commons, he pressed forward for peace, his abiding passion. In the House of Commons, he generally voted against all measures designed to increase wartime expenditures, although there were occasions when the need for Party unity prevented this. Responding to the criticism of C. H. Norman, a prominent member of the NCF who was incarcerated at Dartmoor as a CO, Snowden summarised his position by stating that

Personally I have always been in favour of voting against the [war] Credits, but when you are a member of a small Party beset on all sides by a strong opposition, it is very necessary to hold together and act as a united group.⁹¹

Snowden believed that if the war had to be paid for then the cost should come from the unearned income of the rich and the war profiteers who would not be rendered 'to a condition of starvation' by the imposition of a tax of 15s. in the £.⁹² When military conscription was introduced in January 1916, he took the opportunity to develop the point further by writing that 'We should extend the conscription of life to the conscription of wealth'.⁹³ Indeed, he also outlined his famous capital levy scheme on wealth, exempting property worth less than £91,000 from the levy but imposing rising scales of taxation from 1 per cent to 10 per cent on capital values of up to £1 million. His scheme was, of course, in line with several others that were emerging at that time, and it was the alternative 'Conscription of Wealth' plan of the WEWNC which gained Labour Party backing, since trade unionists were not attracted to the pessimistic tone of Snowden's plans and felt him to be out of touch with reality. That was important because trade union membership increased from about four million to six and a half million between 1914 and 1918 and, despite the wartime restrictions on trade unions, the movement had never been so powerful and effective.

Although trade unionists were not easily seduced by Snowden's economic concerns and those of the ILP, they were in agreement on at least two points that he and the ILP espoused – opposition to the Munitions Bill and opposition to military conscription. The first of these had arisen in the summer of 1915 when the government introduced a bill which restricted the freedom of workers to move from munitions factory to munitions factory without holding a certificate from the first employer, and restricted the right to strike or maintain trade union practices, especially in those factories and workplaces concerned with war production, which were taken into the direct control of the state. Speaking against the Bill in the House of Commons, Snowden emphasised that whilst he supported state measures to control strikes, 'he had never advocated compulsory State arbitration

under such conditions as proposed by the Bill. I have never advocated compulsory arbitration except under a basis of Trade union rights and Trade union safe guards'.⁹⁴ He put up a determined defence of trade unions, although he reiterated his opposition to strikes 'which were indefensible at a time like this', along with his general opposition to trade unionism and his alternative commitment to civil and individual rights. Nevertheless, for his efforts many trade unions, including the London Building Industry Federation and the Furnishing Trades' Association, passed resolutions of support for Snowden's action at the same time as they condemned the failure of the Labour Party more generally to oppose them in Parliament.⁹⁵

The introduction of military and industrial conscription, in January 1916, was the second main event that favoured the growth of the peace movement. The Derby Scheme, a voluntary conscription scheme in which the idea was that all men of military age should indicate their willingness to serve when called up, was failing to attract sufficient volunteers. As a result, the government introduced a Military Service Bill in January 1916 which, when enacted, permitted the conscription of single men of military age and paved the way for further such bills to extend conscription to married men. Most conscripted men accepted conscription, but its introduction transformed the young men of military age who opposed the war into criminals or 'prisoners of conscience', in other words, into COs.

The trade union movement, through the Labour Party conference at Bristol in January 1916, overwhelmingly confirmed its opposition to conscription by 1,716,000 votes to 360,000. Nevertheless, the Labour Party, now in the Wartime Coalition Government, continued to confirm its commitment to the war effort and refused to support agitation against the Military Service Bill.⁹⁶ Henderson and the Labour Party supported the Bill in Parliament, and it was left to Snowden and a small coterie of ILP and radical MPs to oppose it. Snowden made a waspish speech in the House of Commons, in which he described the Bill as 'a strong weapon for enforcing the chains of slavery on democracy' and defended civil rights and individual liberties in what *The Times* described as the 'ablest onslaught on the Bill that has been made in the House'.⁹⁷ All was to no avail. Henderson charged Snowden with inconsistency – on the ground that he wanted compulsion on every issue other than conscription – and the Bill was carried by a vote of 431 to 39.

Snowden and the ILP took the matter to the Labour Party Conference at the end of January 1916, where he charged Henderson and the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) with becoming the 'blind tools of the Government'.⁹⁸ But torn between Snowden's powerful oratory and loyalty to their trade union leaders, the Conference produced a typically contradictory resolution attacking all forms of permanent militarism whilst justifying the present system because of the war.

The most important consequence of these debates for Snowden, Jowett and the ILP were that they increasingly detached from the Labour Party and from the PLP, which, under Henderson, felt free to continue its collaboration with the Coalition Government and to ignore those aspects of the Labour Party Conference resolutions which they opposed. Therefore, the ILP became increasingly identified with

the UDC and the NCF. It was these organisations, and particularly the ILP, that took up the strong stand to support those young men who had been conscripted and claimed exemption from military service on the grounds of conscience. Snowden and the ILP received more than 30,000 letters in connection with this work in 1917 alone.⁹⁹ He also attended the second conference of the NCF as a platform speaker, offering a passionate defence of individual liberty, which the 2,000 strong audience applauded by waving white handkerchiefs.¹⁰⁰

Snowden and the ILP MPs, such as Jowett, were at their best in the House of Commons, where they raised the issue of the COs. In both March and April 1916, Snowden asked about the unfair treatment of COs and stated that the local Tribunals and the War Office were grossly violating the provisions of the Act by, for instance, allowing a military presence on the Tribunal boards, with military officers threatening those who claimed exemptions, failing to listen to the appeals against conscription, and clearly rejecting the cases of men who were medically unfit. He provided many examples of the way in which the Act was being flouted. In one case, the chairman of the Middlesex Appeal Tribunal agreed that the claimant was a CO and the claimant's counsel asked for an absolute exemption, which the Act provided for. However, 'Then the military representative intervened, and suggested that the case should stand over pending the decision of the Central Tribunal in a similar case. The chairman said: The appeal is dismissed'.¹⁰¹ Such biased handling of cases was not uncommon in Tribunals, as evidenced in the case of Arthur Gardiner, a member of the BSP in Huddersfield, who claimed exemption from the army on ethical, rather than religious, grounds in 1916.¹⁰² In Scotland, prominent members of the ILP also found similar treatment. Arthur Woodburn, a member of the ILP, who in the 1930s became Secretary of the Scottish Labour Party, was imprisoned as a CO, moved to Wormwood Scrubs, and then back to Carlton Gaol in Edinburgh; Manny Shinwell, of Glasgow, was imprisoned as a CO towards the end of the war; as was Emrys Hughes, who was the editor of the *Glasgow Forward* in the inter-war years.¹⁰³ The Edinburgh Central ILP, as with other ILP branches, also set up funds to help former soldiers who had been fined and imprisoned for expressing their pacifist views, most famously the C. J. Simmons Defence Fund. In April 1918, Simmons had been in the army, had fought on three fronts and lost a limb, but was charged under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) for preaching pacifism and given a three-month imprisonment and a £25 fine.¹⁰⁴ The whole ILP also became involved in supporting and circulating *The Tribunal* printed and published from 8 March 1917 to inform the whole Labour movement about what was happening to Clifford Allen and the other COs and to report on the number of CO arrests.¹⁰⁵ In April it reported that 236 COs had been in prison for nine months, 223 for twelve months, 161 for fifteen months and 67 for eighteen months, and that in total there were about 1,250 COs in prison.¹⁰⁶ Similar concerns emanated from the Manchester Central ILP which had formed a fund for COs, although by early 1918 'the condition of the Fund was not at all satisfactory'.¹⁰⁷

Snowden and the ILP were able to embarrass Herbert H. Asquith, the Prime Minister, by stating that 34 COs who had been sent to France, then smuggled

out of France and sentenced to death, had had their sentences commuted to ten years' penal servitude. This provoked Asquith to state that no executions would be carried out. And on 25 May 1916 there was another triumph for the anti-conscriptionist movement with the issue of Army Order X, which laid down that after being court martialled, COs should be handed back to the state for incarceration in one of His Majesty's prisons. In June the government also decided to set up the Pelham Committee, which was responsible for finding alternative national work for men who were prepared to take it. Eventually about 4,000 of the current thought to be 20,000 to 23,000 COs (originally thought to be about 16,000), accepted national work under the Pelham Home Office Scheme. And, of the COs, though these were spread throughout the country, the textile district of the West Riding of Yorkshire produced probably the highest numbers in Britain – with at least 98 COs and nine Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU) members in Huddersfield, producing a proportion of 1.96 COs per 100 men who were eligible to be conscripted. Halifax, Leeds and Bradford were the next most important centres of CO opposition to the war and, though figures are patchy and not necessarily fully accurate, it would appear that of Bradford's 59 COs (there also being eight working with the FAU), an estimated 22 were members of the ILP, although Jowett reported 48 in the 1918 ILP census of men eligible to fight.¹⁰⁸

The peace movement and the Leeds convention

Such opposition to the introduction of the Military Service Bill and the defence of COs was soon to be overshadowed on 1 July 1916 when 57,000 British soldiers were killed or injured on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, a battle which eventually cost a million lives and injured to widespread horror and raised issues in Britain about the settlement of the war.¹⁰⁹ This has been described by Max Hastings as 'the great betrayal of innocents – and of the old working class in khaki – by Britain's ruling classes in breeches and glossy riding boots' in his sweeping attack upon incompetent generals who sent brave and naive soldiers to their deaths.¹¹⁰ Field Marshall Haig's suggestion that this five-month battle would be the 'decisive' battle proved false, leading to indiscriminate slaughter which shook the foundations of pre-war British society and may have contributed in a significant way to loosening the bounds which constrained class politics.

Despite the best efforts of the ILP in the campaign against conscription, both in Parliament and the country and despite continued fight for the COs, from the beginning of 1917 the ILP and Snowden now focused their efforts upon the Peace Campaign. Its antecedents occurred in 1915, when in April and July Snowden highlighted the prospects for peace through the *Labour Leader*, declaring that the German Social Democratic Party (SDP) was favouring a negotiated peace and that the Allies should 'make known the terms upon which they would be willing to bring the war to an end'.¹¹¹ In June 1915 Eduard Bernstein, Hugo Haase and Karl Kautsky, of the German SDP, put forward proposals for peace.¹¹² On 13 July, Miss T. Bernheimer, from Amsterdam, forwarded to the Executive Committee of

the German SDP a resolution from a Conference of the Yorkshire branches of the ILP held in Leeds on 10 July 1915, a resolution which stated that

This conference welcomes the demands which are being made by the Socialists of Germany in favour of peace and is of opinion that the time has come when the British Government should declare specifically the conditions upon which it is prepared to enter peace negotiations.¹¹³

It was signed by Ben Riley, the Chairman of the Yorkshire Division of the ILP, and John Arnott, its Organising Secretary. This, and similar initiatives, organised by Snowden and the ILP and reported through *Labour Leader*, were closely monitored by MI5. Its files suggested that it had a circulation of around 27,000, and that the National Labour Press was being scrutinised for prosecution for publishing the *Labour Leader*. Apparently, the *Labour Leader* held a similar position to *Vorwärts* [*Forward*], the organ of the German Social Democratic Party, in Germany, and it was 'the most quoted paper in the German press at the present time' and that 'Every anti-military organisation in the country looks to the "Labour Leader" for sympathy and support'.¹¹⁴ However, the *Labour Leader* never seemed to quite overstep the mark to be closed but was under constant scrutiny by MI5. Its files (the KV files), recorded the names of all of the members of the National Labour Press Board, who were nearly all members of the ILP, and the Director of Special Intelligence sent a letter to all of the proprietors of the Press on 12 July 1916, indicating, 'The *Labour Leader* has been used by the enemy for his propaganda. In these circumstances it is not considered desirable to allow further copies of the paper to go abroad'.¹¹⁵ The files secretly reported that 18 hostile pamphlets had been published in opposition to the war and that 12 had been printed by the National Labour Press run by the ILP.¹¹⁶

By this time, the ILP and the UDC had agreed to press for a peace based upon the main demands of the UDC, focusing upon an agreed settlement based upon the principle that there would be no annexation of territory without the approval of the people involved and based upon a foreign policy decided by the people of Britain. In addition, it was felt that universal free trade was essential for peace since it was believed that it would remove the possibility of economic grievance and conflict.¹¹⁷ The demand for peace gathered pace when the German SDP asked the German Chancellor whether or not he would be prepared to outline the conditions under which he would enter peace negotiations. His promising answer was that he would be prepared to consider any proposals put forward by Britain, and therefore Snowden asked Asquith a similar question the same week but elicited the holding reply that any terms would first be discussed by the Allied governments.¹¹⁸

Snowden raised the issue to a higher plane when he made the first speech in Parliament in favour of a negotiated settlement on 23 February 1916. It was subsequently published by the Blackburn Independent Labour Party as a *Plea for Peace*. His main assertion was that peace could be negotiated by Britain without the loss of honour since the outstanding lesson of the War was that militarism is

discredited and that it had now proved to be a futile method of serving aggressive designs. To Snowden it only required the Prime Minister to go one step further for peace 'and we have right to demand that the Government shall state in much more definite and precise language the terms upon which they would be willing to consider peace'.¹¹⁹

There was now increasing evidence that the Peace Campaign had some prospect of success. The events of 1915 and 1916 had changed trade union opinions on the war. In Bradford ILP in 1915, J. H. Palin, who had been chairman of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants at the time of the famous Taff Vale dispute and had chaired the 21st Conference of the ILP in 1914, had bluntly stated at the ILP Annual Conference in April 1916, 'We do not want Germans here', and then went off to fight in France. Yet, this was almost the last hurrah of views that had predominated from the beginning of the war because by that time such opinions were expressed less frequently. In Bradford whilst there had been a clear majority of trade union support for the war effort, by June 1915 the Bradford Trades and Labour Council had passed a resolution 'believing conscription in any form to be a violation of the principle of civic freedom' perceiving that 'it is impossible to reconcile a national service industry with private profit-making'.¹²⁰ The Trades Union Congress (TUC) parliamentary circular calling for trade union help in army recruitment seemed to have a declining impact, and a vote in November 1915 found the Trades Council equally divided on the issue, and another vote in December 1915 revealed that in a vote involving a third of the membership, well over a third voted against supporting army recruitment campaigns.¹²¹ However, when military conscription was introduced in January 1916, the Bradford Trades and Labour Council withdrew its support for the army recruitment campaign and organised a Peace Conference. The imprisonment of Revis Barber, the son of Walter Barber who was Secretary of the Trades Council, as a CO also did much to win over the Bradford trade unionists to the ILP peace movement.¹²² Opposition to war grew throughout 1916, with the Trades Council pressuring the Yorkshire Federation of Trades Councils to hold a No-Conscription Conference at Textile Hall, Bradford, in December 1916.

Elsewhere, there was a more mixed response. The Glasgow Trades Council swung against the war, as did the Manchester Trades Council, in favour of peace and non-involvement in the recruiting campaign, but in areas like Bristol and Northampton trade union support for the war effort seemed to have kept largely in place.¹²³ Nevertheless, such a swing of support encouraged Snowden in his efforts to mount a full Peace Campaign, an action strengthened by the fact that US President Woodrow Wilson spoke on 27 May 1916 in favour of a negotiated peace settlement. The Axis, or Central, Powers welcomed the message, but the Allies replied that their war aims were well known and that they were entitled to reparations which would be discussed at the moment of negotiation.¹²⁴ These moves produced at least nine opportunities for a negotiated settlement between December 1916 and February 1918, which involved President Wilson's initiative discussed and the appeal of the Pope for a negotiated settlement, issued on 1 August 1917, before the Allied Powers closed the door on negotiations in February 1918.

Throughout these diplomatic exchanges, Snowden and the ILP drifted closer to the Cardinal Principles of the UDC, stressing that there should be no annexation of territories without the will of the people concerned and asking whether or not the Allied enthusiasm for nationalism extended to Egypt and India.¹²⁵ Once Snowden became chairman of the ILP and its NAC, at the Easter Conference he sent a circular around to all ILP branches on 20 April 1917 stressing the great work and propaganda that all branches had to undertake, particularly in connection with the demands for peace, and that there should be a revival of propaganda on the 'old lines of Socialist teaching, applying its principles to the new age which industrial and social problems have raised as a result of the war'.¹²⁶ Even then, the ILP was emphasising negotiation on war and exercising caution for at the same conference, at which Snowden was elected to the post of chairman of the Party, the 'Bermondsey resolution', opposing 'any kind of war' was rejected, having already been rejected at most of the Divisional council conferences prior to that, the Scottish Division Conference having rejected it by 52 votes to 17.¹²⁷

Increasingly, the Peace Campaign became the focus of the ILP activities in 1917 and was driven on by Snowden. All three main threads of the Peace Campaign – Allied terms, no annexation, and the involvement of the people – in fact came together and were made more pertinent by the Russian Revolution of February/March 1917. The new Provisional Revolutionary Government of Russia adopted a two-part policy: to press for a general peace without annexations and, at the same time, to defend the homeland and the revolution against the German invader. It was known as Revolutionary Defence (or Defencism) and offered Russia a way to disengage from the war. The success of this policy partly relied upon the military situation but also on the participation of the Allied socialists in the proposed conference at Stockholm. Though Alexander Kerensky, the Minister of War in the Provisional Government, did harbour some interests in continuing the war, the majority of the Mensheviks and their allies wished to extricate Russia from the conflict and, in his April theses, Lenin made it plain that in any case others would act to end the slaughter.

In an attempt to get the House of Commons to endorse the declarations of the 'democratic Government of Russia', Snowden was lyrical on the way in which the Russian Revolution fulfilled all the objectives of the Peace Campaign.

No event in our generation has so thrilled the world as the Russian Revolution. It has given us new hope in democracy and revived our faith in Internationalism. It has given us a hope that the war aims which have been declared by the statesmen of the various countries – the maintenance of civilisation and the triumph of democracy, are going to be realised in the only way in which these ideals and our own can be realised, that is by the people of different countries.¹²⁸

There was to be an immediate response from British socialists.

Some ILP branches had immediately responded to the February/March Revolution demands for economic reconstruction and peace. Indeed, the Burton-on-Trent

branch demanded the nationalisation of industries, minimum wages for workers, and for the government to ‘institute Peace Negotiations’ which would establish the integrity and independence for all states’.¹²⁹ Also, the United Socialist Council, formed on the eve of the war by the ILP, the BSP and the Fabian Society, took action. Its joint secretaries were Albert Inkpin (BSP) and Francis Johnson (ILP). Snowden was chairman of this organisation which called the Leeds Convention and he, along with J. Fineberg, Fred Jowett, W. C. Anderson, George Lansbury and Robert Smillie distributed a circular advertising the ‘Great Labour, Socialist and Democratic Convention to Hail the Russian Revolution and the Origin of British Democracy’ on 23 May, to be held on 3 June 1917 at Albert Hall, Leeds.¹³⁰ There were 1,150 delegates at this meeting which formed the Council of Workers’ and Soldiers. The event claimed to be a ‘Democratic Conference to establish Democracy in Great Britain’, and ‘To Follow Russia’ in what was seen, by MacDonald and Glasier in their speeches as the ‘overthrow of the evil of Czarism’. It passed four resolutions – hailing the Russian Revolution (moved by MacDonald and Mrs. Montefiore); advocating moves towards establishing a general peace to end the war based upon the right of nations to decide their own affairs (moved by Philip Snowden and E. C. Fairchild); demanding the creation of a charter of civil liberties, including calls for equal political rights, the freedom of speech, and the release of political and religious prisoners by the British government (moved by Mrs. Despard and Bertrand Russell); and demanding the formation of a Council of Workers’ and Soldiers’ delegates in every town, urban and rural district (moved by W. C. Anderson and R. Williams). Five of the 25 main speakers – MacDonald, Snowden, Ethel Snowden, Fred Shaw and R. C. Wallhead – were primarily members of the ILP, whilst other prominent members of the ILP such as Dr. Alfred Salter were present, with members of the BSP, trade unionists such as Ernest Bevin and Robert Smillie, or middle-class intellectuals such as Bertrand Russell.¹³¹

Despite the wide cross-section of attendance, the hopes of the Leeds Conference did not survive long, largely because it was not taken up by the trade unionists who felt that the councils it intended to form would be a challenge to their own organisations. As a result, Snowden and the ILP began, instead, to hope that the Stockholm (or the third Zimmerwald) Conference of Socialists, to be held on 5–12 September 1917, would lead to peace. The Labour Party had been invited to send delegates to this conference in April 1917 by Camille Huysmans, the Belgium Socialist, but on 9 May its NEC rejected the invite on the basis that there would be German and Austrian representatives there and, instead, suggested that a British delegation should be sent to Russia with the intention of inviting the Russian Council of Workmen’s and Soldiers’ Delegates to send representatives to a London Conference. This did not seem a realistic possibility, but Henderson, with the reluctant approval of the British Cabinet, went to Russia in May 1917 and returned in July 1917. During his famous visit, he changed his mind and felt that there was a need to attend the Stockholm Conference. He persuaded the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) to call a special conference on 10 August, at which the resolution to go to Stockholm was passed by 1,846,000 to 550,000.¹³² However, this special conference also decided that no delegates would

be allowed from any affiliated or unaffiliated socialist body in Britain, which meant that the ILP could not send delegates. Snowden protested, but a reconvened meeting of the Labour NEC on 21 August narrowly confirmed the earlier decision. In the end the British government intervened and announced that it would not issue passports to British delegates, and in the end the Stockholm Conference became little more than a conference of the Russian socialists, socialists from the Central/Axis powers and a few representatives from the smaller Allied powers and committed itself, secretly, to mass action to bring about peace.

Nevertheless, there is an intriguing photograph of an Allied Socialist meeting, held in London in August 1917, which indicates that a meeting took place, which appears not to have been commented upon. The photograph is of 29 men and one woman, Margaret Bondfield, who later became a Labour MP and the first woman in the Cabinet (in the second Labour government of 1929–1931) and was listed as an ILP delegate. There were 18 listed people present, from various socialist organisations, although only 17 are precisely named. These included E. C. Fairchild, Fineberg, Albert Inkpin, Tom Quelch and Albert Ward for the BSP; W. C. Anderson MP, Bondfield, H. N. Brailsford, Francis Johnson, Fred Jowett MP, J. B. Glasier, Ben Riley, H. Dubery [H. Duberry] and Ramsay MacDonald MP, for the ILP. There was also Modigliani Lazzari, who could have been Constantino Lazzari, secretary of the Italian Socialist Party, Jean-Laurent-Frederick Longuet of the French Socialists, and a ‘Russian’ representing the Russian Soviet. In other words, only three of the 30 delegates in the photograph were actually indicated to be foreign representatives, although there may have been other foreign representatives amongst those not identified.¹³³ The ILP provided the largest identified group of delegates at this conference, which was clearly pressing forward the international Peace Campaign, although there is no account of precisely what was decided at this meeting.

Ethel Snowden, Philip’s wife, also took up and pressed forward with the Women’s Peace Crusade, having re-joined the ILP during the war. It was led by her, Mrs. J. Bruce Glasier and Margaret Bondfield, also prominent members of the ILP.¹³⁴ Ethel Snowden explained, in the September 1917 issue of *UDC*, that her campaign had emerged from a variety of initiatives in the summer of 1917, although it was formed in 1916 in Glasgow. It spread to other towns and cities and worked with the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, which had been formed in the Autumn of 1915, and it soon gathered 3,500 members as it fought for peace and prepared for the problems of post-war reconstruction.¹³⁵ Between 1 March 1917 and 31 August, 49 branches had been formed, although 22 seemed to have gone out of existence during that period.¹³⁶ However, ‘In many large towns such as Glasgow, Leeds, London, Bradford, Manchester, Blackburn and Nelson – Women’s Peace Crusades have been successfully launched and are doing splendid work for Peace by Negotiation’ and the NAC of the ILP and its Advisory Committee appealed for all branches of the ILP to form a Women’s Peace Crusade.¹³⁷ Numerous Peace Crusade meetings were held throughout September 1917, Mrs. Dollan lecturing in Glasgow on 17 September and Helen Crawford lecturing in Edinburgh on 26 September on the work of the Russian Government for world

peace.¹³⁸ Such work was also integrated into a network of other organisations that represented ILP interests, most obviously with The National Council of Civil Liberties whose President was W. C. Anderson (chair of the ILP between 1910 and 1913), and its Honorary Secretary Ethel Snowden.¹³⁹

In Manchester the women of the ILP were amongst the first to support the Women's Peace Movement, and in Leicester it was the Women's Labour League which began the Crusade. The campaign demanded a negotiated peace and held demonstrations which attracted 10,000 in Glasgow on 8 July, 20,000 at Nelson on 21 August and 4,000 at Leicester on 12 August, drawing together both pacifists and those who simply wanted a negotiated settlement in the belief that this war should 'end now, by negotiations'. Ethel's activities and those of the Women's Peace Crusade were inspired by the Russian Revolution, the Menshevik Revolution of February 1917, and through *UDC* she asked,

Why do not the Allies explicitly accept the Russian formula, No annexation and indemnities, and the right of the peoples to determine their own Government? Why do not the Allies make as clear as sunlight to the German people that they have no designs on their territory, nor on their trade hereafter?¹⁴⁰

The Women's Peace Crusade was later to circulate a resolution beseeching the government to 'support the Foreign Policy of the Russian Revolutionary Government as a basis for Peace'.¹⁴¹

In the meantime, the Stockholm Conference came and went without ILP presence, in early September 1917 and, shortly after, the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917 brought disquiet into the ILP ranks. The events on Russia, the introduction of a proletariat dictatorship and the rigidity of the Marxist ideology applied by Lenin offended Snowden's softer, more liberal pacifist commitment, although the Manchester ILP Clarion Café branch was briefly drawn into participating with the BSP in forming a United Socialist Council committed to revolutionary change in the Manchester area.¹⁴² Snowden was distressed to hear that ILP pacifists were supporting Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution, and matters came to a head at the ILP Annual Conference held at Leicester in March 1918. As Chairman, he was largely responsible for the toned-down message of support sent to the Russian Bolsheviks, which merely noted the stand made for the social and economic freedom by the workers of Russia. In reality, developments in Russia had undermined Snowden's conception of democratic change, and despite all the efforts of the ILP, the Peace Campaign was clearly faltering. At this very moment, the ILP was faced with a serious challenge to its exclusivity as the leading parliamentary socialist party in Britain.

The Labour Party Conference and the decline of the ILP peace movement

The Labour Party introduced its new constitution at the beginning of 1918 after months of discussion. Although it contained a commitment to socialism, the

famous Clause Four, which committed to the common ownership of the means of production, it also contained changes which ended the federal structure of the Labour Party's NEC, giving trade unions much greater control of the NEC and removing the ILP's right to direct representation. Snowden and the ILP were strongly opposed to these changes, which reduced the ILP's role at the national level, feeling that the Labour Party was not to be trusted, having proved to have been 'more capitalist than the employers, and more militant than the Government during the War'.¹⁴³ The main objection was that the changes did not guarantee that individuals would have a say in the Party but rather confirmed 'The tyranny of the massed vote of the great industrial organisations'.¹⁴⁴ What he perceived was the need for a party of individual members who, theoretically at least, would be able to contribute fully to the development of the policy in the Party for

Men with political ideals and political enthusiasm will not be content to be crushed by the heavy weight of huge numbers who have brought into the Labour Party the ideas and methods of Trade Unionism, which are admirably suited to industrial purposes but quite unsuitable for political aims.¹⁴⁵

For this reason Snowden campaigned strongly for the view that the ILP should build up its membership and continue to act as the socialist conscience of the Labour Party. He disagreed with those such as Jowett, who expressed the view that the ILP should cease its independent existence now that the Labour Party had acquired a socialist constitution with a socialist clause which some historians, such as Ross McKibbin, feel was an 'uncharacteristic adornment' of the new Constitution.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, it contained some commitment to controlling gas and electricity, and issues such as raising the school leaving age, for which some ILP branches had campaigned.¹⁴⁷

By 1918 it was clear to all that the new Labour Party constitution had strengthened the hands of the trade union leaders just as surely as it had reduced the influence of the ILP. The peace movement was also failing, and trade unions had rejected the message of the Leeds Convention.¹⁴⁸ The entry of the USA had debased the coinage of President Wilson's appeal for a negotiated peace settlement, and the Allies were refusing to negotiate with the Central Powers. It was a very isolated Snowden, and a disillusioned peace group in the House of Commons, who discussed the issue of peace on 13 February 1918. A. J. Balfour heaped the obloquy of the House on Snowden and the ILP, though this did not prevent Snowden from expressing the view that 'There is no enthusiasm for the war. There is an almost universal desire for peace'.¹⁴⁹ By that time Snowden and his ILP supporters had long realised that whilst the Red Flag floated over the Tsar's Palace, it was unlikely to float over Westminster.¹⁵⁰ The peace movement was running out of steam. Instead there were moves, in Glasgow, and other ILP centres such as Manchester, to form a local United Socialist Council to bring the ILP, the BSP and other socialist groups together to prepare for the general election which would undoubtedly follow the end of the Great War.¹⁵¹

The Great War ended at 11 am on 11 November 1918 with the signing of the Armistice and Lloyd George's Wartime Coalition Government called a general election, a 'khaki election', for December 1918. This was to be a measure of the ILP's impact and influence, and saw the number of ILP MPs reduced from eight on the eve of the war to two – William Graham (Edinburgh Central), and John Maclean (Glasgow Govan) in 1918, although Tom Myers won Spen Valley in a parliamentary by-election in 1919. Clynes, Jowett, Lansbury, MacDonald, Richardson and Snowden all lost their seats in what can be only be seen as a widespread condemnation of their general approach to the war.

Conclusion

The Great War exerted enormous pressure upon the ILP. At its outset, the ILP was the largest and most effective parliamentary socialist party in Britain. However, during the war, the ILP membership and its leadership was deeply divided, with many members leaving for the Labour Party as it alienated trade union support, challenged the Labour Party's pro-war stance in the Wartime Coalition Government and gained an exaggerated reputation for pacifism. These factors all undermined the ILP's power and influence, a situation further compounded by the Labour Party's adoption of a socialist constitution in 1918. Nevertheless, having fallen from about 40,000 members to 27,000 between 1914 and the beginning of 1917, largely because of the vociferous and outspoken opinions of a divided membership, which Dowse has chosen to ignore, the rising support for a negotiated peace did see its membership rise again to around 36,000 by the end of the war. It had recovered much support, but the war had brought about a seismic shift in the politics of Britain which, amongst other things, thrust the Labour Party forward as a party of government with considerable trade union support, meaning that the ILP would never again be able to dominate the politics of the Labour Party as it had once done. The ILP would never be able to match the power and influence of the relatively conservative trade unions, and their block vote, within the Labour Party and was now faced with the dilemma of whether or not to continue. What was its future? Should it merge into the Labour Party, as Fred Jowett once suggested, or was it to continue in existence as a form of socialist conscience, as Philip Snowden believed? If the latter, what type of social democratic organisation was it going to be?

Notes

- 1 Arthur Marwick, *Britain in a Century of Total War: War, Peace and Social Change*, London, Little Brown, 1967, p. 84.
- 2 Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914–1935*, London, Collins, 1966, p. 29.
- 3 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 21.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 5 Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*, pp. 122, 126; also, Morris, 'Peace, But Not at Any Price'.
- 6 Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*, chapter 7, pp. 119–41.

- 7 City of London ILP Minutes, 10 December 1914; Sheffield ILP Minutes, 31 July 1916.
- 8 *Merthyr Pioneer*, 14 August 1914.
- 9 *Forward*, 5 December 1914, quoting from the *Merthyr Pioneer*.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 2 January 1915.
- 11 Republished from the *Merthyr Pioneer*, in 1915, in the *Bradford Pioneer*, 21 April 1916, about nine months after Hardie's death.
- 12 *Bradford Pioneer*, 9 April 1915.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 2 June 1916.
- 14 Philip Snowden, *An Autobiography*, in 2 volumes, London, Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1934, p. 417.
- 15 *Forward*, 2 January 1915, quoting MacDonald in the *Leicester Pioneer*.
- 16 Emanuel Shinwell, *Conflict without Malice*, London, Odhams, 1953, p. 115.
- 17 Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, pp. 171, 183–4. The UDC had 650,000 members by the end of the war, according to the *Labour Leader*, 20 February 1919.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 183.
- 19 *The Tribunal*, 13 December 1917.
- 20 *Bradford Pioneer*, 2 June 1916.
- 21 *Labour Leader*, 26 October 1926.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 18 February 1915.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, vol. LIX, col. 2148, 18 March 1914; Snowden, *An Autobiography*, p. 362.
- 25 *Forward*, 9 October 1915.
- 26 *Labour Leader*, 28 October 1917.
- 27 Colin Cross, *Philip Snowden*, London, Barrie & Rockcliffe, 1966, p. 154.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 *Labour Leader*, 15 April 1915.
- 30 Glasier Collection, Liverpool, University Library, 1915/78, Letter from Snowden to Glasier, dated 9 October 1915.
- 31 Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*, p. 17.
- 32 Robert Blatchford, *General von Sneak: A Little Study of War*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1918.
- 33 Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*.
- 34 *Forward*, 9 March 1918.
- 35 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 29, quoting from the Lancashire Divisional Souvenir Programme, Annual Conference, 1921, in Transport House Library, give the figures as 5,794 men and 1,333 women in 1914; 3,857 men 1,798 women in 1917; and 4,862 men and 1,769 women in 1918.
- 36 James Hinton, *The First Shop Steward Movement*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1973 focused upon the syndicalist and Marxist militancy of the Red Clyde whilst Iain Maclean, *The Legend of Red Clydeside*, Edinburgh, John Donald, 1983, argues that the political militancy of Red Clyde was exaggerated. Joseph Melling, 'Work, Culture and Politics on "Red Clydeside": The ILP During the First World War', McKinlay and Morris (eds), *The ILP on Clydeside 1893–1932*, pp. 83–122, argues that the ILP was active during the Great War and strongly thereafter with the decline of industrial militancy and the decline of religious sectarianism. Also, the Glasgow Federation Executive Committee Minute Book, 1917–1919, 18 April 1919, the resolution of the Partick Branch against the imprisonment of Messrs Shinwell, Gallacher and McCartney.
- 37 *Forward*, 29 April 1916. Along with Jowett, Glasier 237 votes, Margaret Bondfield 227 and W. C. Anderson 210. Those not elected were Wake (70), Maxton (55), Cliford Allen (51), Brockway (41) and J. H. Hudson (35).

46 *The ILP and the Great War, 1914–1918*

- 38 Ibid., 13 January 1917.
- 39 Ibid., 9 March 1918.
- 40 Ibid., 23 March 1918.
- 41 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, p. 33.
- 42 Jay Murray Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War: Ideas and Politics in Britain, 1912–1918*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974, particularly Chapter 8, pp. 234–69.
- 43 *Bradford Pioneer*, 9 January 1914.
- 44 Georges Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War: The Collapse of the Second International*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1972, particularly chapter 10, pp. 195–215.
- 45 *Bradford Pioneer*, 10 July 1914.
- 46 Fred Jowett, *Democratic Control*, ILP Position Leaflet, No. 2, London, National Labour Press, 1916.
- 47 Fred Jowett was ILP and Labour MP for Bradford West from 1906–1918 and Bradford East 1922–1924 and 1929–1931. He was First Commissioner of Works in the Labour government of 1924 and the subject of Fenner Brockway's book, *Socialism Over Sixty Years: The Life and Times of Jowett of Bradford*, London, National Labour Press and Allen & Unwin, 1926. His work on the Committee system and the rejection of Cabinet government appears in his book, *What is the Use of Parliament*.
- 48 Cross, *Philip Snowden*, p. 128; Keith Laybourn, *Philip Snowden: A Biography*, Aldershot, Gower/Wildwood, 1988.
- 49 Bradford Trades and Labour Council, *Year Book, 1912*, Bradford, Bradford Trades and Labour Council, 1913, pp. 47–51, and supplementary information from the *Year Book, 1913*, Bradford, Bradford Trades and Labour Council, 1914, and *Year 1914*, Bradford Trades and Labour Council, 1915.
- 50 Bradford and Trades Labour Council Minutes, 7 November 1912, also quoted by Fred Jowett in the report in the *Bradford Pioneer*, 7 August 1914 of his speech 2 August 1914.
- 51 *Bradford Pioneer*, 7 August 1914.
- 52 Ibid., 21 May 1915.
- 53 *Bradford Weekly Telegraph*, 23 July 1915.
- 54 *Bradford Pioneer*, 25 February 1916.
- 55 Ibid., 1 March 1918.
- 56 Ibid., 20 December 1918.
- 57 Ibid., 22 October 1915.
- 58 The NCF had nine branches in the textile district of Yorkshire at this time in Bradford, Bingley, Brighouse, Halifax, Huddersfield, Keighley, Leeds, Mytholmroyd and Wakefield, cited in Cyril Pearce, 'Shaping a Radical Community – Labour in the West Yorkshire 1906 to 1918', in B. Evans, G. Haigh, J. Lancaster, and K. Laybourn (eds), *The Sons and Daughters of Labour: A History and Recollection of the Labour Party Within the Historic Boundaries of the West Riding*, Huddersfield, Huddersfield University Press, 2007.
- 59 *Bradford Pioneer*, 23 December 1914.
- 60 Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*, p. 143. The long-established figures are John W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience: A History 1916–1919*, London, 1921 and suggest that there may have been about 16,100 COs in Britain and that there were 59 COs in Bradford and eight others in the Friends' Ambulance Unit. Pearce, after gathering extensive information together, suggests that the total has to be revised upwards to between 20,662 and 23,032 on his calculations based upon studies of undercounting in Huddersfield and other areas. Graham figures about 0.44 per thousand of those eligible for military conscription in Bradford were COs, although Pearce's adjustments would suggest that that may be at a minimum of 0.55 per thousand.
- 61 *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 30 December 1918. Willie Leach later became ILP MP for Bradford Central 1922–1924, 1929–1931, and Labour MP for the same seat between 1935 to 1945.

- 62 *Bradford Pioneer*, 14 August 1914.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 16 October 1914.
- 64 *Forward*, 10 July 1915.
- 65 Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience* (2001 version), p. 217.
- 66 Kevin McPhillips, *Joseph Burgess (1853–1934) and the Founding of the Independent Labour Party*, Lampeter, Edwin Mellen, 2005, chapter 12, pp. 141–54; *Bradford Pioneer*, 20 July 1915.
- 67 *Forward*, 4 December 1915.
- 68 His daughter Nora became Nora Feinberg and had a son named Willie Feinberg, who became a promising Labour MP before being killed in a motorbike accident.
- 69 *Bradford Pioneer*, 20 July 1917.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 27 July 1917.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 9 November 1917.
- 72 *Ibid.*
- 73 Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*.
- 74 Cyril Pearce, 'Shaping the Radical Community – Labour in West Yorkshire 1906 to 1918', Evans, Haigh, Lancaster, and Laybourn (eds), *Sons and Daughters of Labour*, pp. 1–28.
- 75 CVL/GV/1/1/ 191, Colne Valley Labour League, Minutes, 1891–1939, Annual Council Meeting, 8 April 1916.
- 76 Colne Valley Labour League, Minutes, Committee Meeting 28 October 1916, Special Council Meeting 19 November 1916, and Conference, 20 January 1917 and Divisional Party Meeting, 14 April 1917.
- 77 Melling, 'Work, Culture and Politics'.
- 78 *Forward*, 29 April 1915.
- 79 Melling, 'Work, Culture and Politics', pp. 107–16.
- 80 *Ibid.*, p. 113.
- 81 *Forward*, 11 September 1918.
- 82 *Ibid.*, 9 January 1918 and 11 September 1918.
- 83 *Ibid.*, 2 January 1915.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 7 October, 25 November 1916.
- 85 Kidd, 'Labour and Socialism During the First World War in Bristol and Northampton', p. 78, quoting the *Western Daily Press*, 10 November 1915.
- 86 Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*, pp. 126, 122; also Morris, 'Peace, But Not at Any Price'.
- 87 Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p. 184.
- 88 *Labour Leader*, 12 April 1917.
- 89 *Ibid.*, 4 November 1915.
- 90 Snowden, *An Autobiography*, pp. 377–86.
- 91 ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 1917/192.
- 92 *Labour Leader*, 20 May 1915.
- 93 Philip Snowden, *How to Pay for the War: Tax the Unearned Incomes of the Rich*, London, ILP, 1916; *Labour Leader*, 20 May 1916.
- 94 *Labour Leader*, 1 July 1915.
- 95 *Ibid.*, 8 July 1915.
- 96 *Ibid.*, 3 February 1916.
- 97 *Ibid.*, 20 January 1916.
- 98 *Ibid.*, 3 February 1916.
- 99 Snowden, *An Autobiography*, p. 406.
- 100 Marwick, *Clifford Allen*, p. 31.
- 101 Philip Snowden, *British Prussianism: The Scandal of the Tribunals: Full Report of Two Speeches Delivered in the House of Commons by Philip Snowden, MP, March 22 and April 6, 1916*, London, National Labour Press, Ltd, 1916, pp. 17–18.
- 102 Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*.

- 103 ACC 7656/2/1/ Arthur Woodburn papers, which contain details he gathered connected with his time as a CO and sent to D. R. Moir of the *Daily Herald*; Dep. 176, Emrys Hughes Papers, The Journal of a Coward – political activists 1911–1918 as a CO. Also look at the ILP Glasgow Federal Executive Committee, Minute Book, 1917–1919, which deals with the support of COs, particularly on 14 December 1917 when the Maryhill Branch provided details of the conditions of COs.
- 104 Edinburgh Central ILP, ACC 524 (7), in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, Minutes, April 1918.
- 105 Ibid., ACC7656/2/1 contains copies of *The Tribunal* for 29 April 1917, 13 December 1917, and 25 April 1918.
- 106 *The Tribunal*, 25 April 1918.
- 107 Manchester ILP Clarion Café Minutes, 12 February 1918.
- 108 Pearce, ‘Shaping a Radical Community’, p. 23, and Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*. After Huddersfield, in order of importance was Halifax, with 35 COs and four FAUs, forming 0.75 per cent of eligible men, Leeds with 125 and 44, respectively, forming 0.59 per cent, and Bradford with 59 and 8, forming 0.44 per cent.
- 109 Trevor Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 349.
- 110 Max Hastings, *Catastrophe: Europe Goes to War 1914*, London, William Collins, 2013, amongst his many publications.
- 111 *Labour Leader*, 15 April and 1 July 1915.
- 112 Ibid., 11 July 1915.
- 113 The Special Branch KV files, in file KV2/1917, file on Fenner Archibald Brockway.
- 114 KV2/1917, statements made in June and July.
- 115 Ibid., letter from Director of Special Intelligence to the *Labour Leader*, 12 June 1916, and in a copy of a letter of 17 October 1916, from *The Canadian Forward*, official organ of the SDP of Canada, which noted the ban but also asked for articles from Snowden, Anderson and MacDonald.
- 116 This list in KV2/1917 included *How the War Came; Nationality and Patriotism; Britain and the War*; and *The Devils Business*.
- 117 *Labour Leader*, 10 August 1916.
- 118 Snowden, *An Autobiography*, p. 430.
- 119 Philip Snowden, *A Plea for Peace*, Blackburn, ILP, 1916, pp. 8, 16.
- 120 Bradford Trades and Labour Council Minutes, 17 June 1915.
- 121 Ibid., 10 December 1915.
- 122 Ibid., 29 November 1917.
- 123 Matthew Kidd, ‘Labour and Socialism During the First World War in Bristol and Northampton’ and Chris Wrigley, ‘At the Crossroads: The Labour Party, the Trade Unions and the Choices of Direction for the Democratic Left’, both in Bland and Carr (eds), *Labour, British Radicalism and the First World War*, respectively, pp. 73–9 and pp. 35–55.
- 124 Snowden, *An Autobiography*, pp. 436–7.
- 125 *Labour Leader*, 7 June 1917.
- 126 Edinburgh Central ILP Minutes, ACC 5241 (6), circular in the minutes.
- 127 *Forward*, 13 January and 7 April 1917.
- 128 *Labour Leader*, 24 May 1917.
- 129 Burton-on-Trent Minute Book, 18 March 1917.
- 130 Edinburgh ILP Central Branch, ACC5241 (6) contains a copy of the circular.
- 131 *Labour Leader*, 7 June 1917; National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh ILP Central Branch AC5242 (6), which contains material about Dr. Alfred Salter, of the Bermondsey ILP and its Co-operative movement, and the role of James Ramsay MacDonald and J. Bruce Glasier.
- 132 Edinburgh ILP Central Branch, AC 5241 (7).

- 133 The original photograph was passed on from Ben Riley's daughter to me in 2016. It is in poor condition, but with information attached. Copies of this have been circulated to others, including Michael Meadowcroft, the ex-Liberal MP, who displayed it at the centenary conference of the Leeds Conference held in June 2017, where no one was able to identify the occasion. Charles-Laurent-Frederick Longuit was a pacifist, one of Marx's grandsons, editor of *Le Populaire*, and Secretary of the French Socialist Party. Fineberg, could have been Willie Fineberg, the son of Nora Fineberg, the daughter of Joseph Burgess, the newspaper editor of the *Workman's Times*, the paper which called labour unions and socialist groups together to form the ILP at Bradford in 1893. He was later active in the Labour Party but was killed in an accident when many felt that he could have become Leader of the Labour Party.
- 134 Edinburgh ILP Central Branch, ACC 5241 (6), letter/circular on the Women's Peace Crusade, 27 July 1917.
- 135 For the international connections look at Gavin Baird and Bradley W. Hart, 'The Stamford Connection: David Starr Jordan, Eugenics and the Anglo-American Anti-war Movement', in Bland and Carr (eds), *Labour, British Radicalism and the First World War*, pp. 220–39.
- 136 Memorandum circulated by the Women's Peace Crusade on 14 September 1917, a copy to be found in the Edinburgh ILP Central Branch minutes and correspondence ACC5241 (6); Jill Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain Since 1820*, London, Virago, 1989, chapters 5 and 6; Anne Wiltshire, *Most Dangerous Women: Feminist Peace Campaigners of the Great War*, London, HarperCollins, 1985, chapters 4 and 5; Jo Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote: The Erosion of Democratic Suffragism in Britain During the First World War*, New York, Palgrave, 2007.
- 137 Circular Letter from the Women's Crusade, 1 September 1917, a copy to be found in the Edinburgh ILP Central Branch, ACC5242 (6).
- 138 Edinburgh ILP Central Branch, ACC524 (6) lists a number of letters and memorandum on the campaign.
- 139 Ibid., letter from the National Council of Civil Liberties, June 1917.
- 140 UDC, September 1917.
- 141 Edinburgh Central ILP Minutes, 27 September 1917.
- 142 Manchester ILP Clarion Café branch Minutes, 11 September 1918, 12 November 1918.
- 143 *Labour Leader*, 12 July 1917.
- 144 Ibid., 25 October 1917.
- 145 Ibid.
- 146 Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910–1924*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1974.
- 147 Burton-on-Trent ILP Minutes, 18 November 1917.
- 148 Snowden, *An Autobiography*, p. 456.
- 149 *War or Peace? Report of Speech Delivered in the House of Commons on Wednesday, February 13, 1918 by Philip Snowden*, London, National Labour Press, 1918, p. 10.
- 150 *Labour Leader*, 12 April 1917.
- 151 Glasgow ILP Federation, 22 February 1918. It organised a peace demonstration with 16 local organisations on 22 March 1918. It also supported the Clyde Propaganda Defence Committee, in its Minutes, 18 October 1918.

2 **Should we stay or should we go? The Independent Labour Party and its new role, 1918–1922**

A. J. P. Taylor, the famous twentieth-century British historian, presented the generally accepted view of the impact of the Labour Party's new socialist 1918 Constitution on the ILP when he wrote that 'Ultimately the ILP . . . was ruined'.¹ This was a view held briefly by some ILP stalwarts at the time, including Fenner Brockway, who felt that it should be wound up, its job now done. A similar conclusion was reached by the Bristol ILP in a leaflet published in 1919, entitled 'The ILP and the Labour Party. What is the Difference?' Nevertheless, it is clear that the majority of the ILP membership wished for the ILP to continue in existence, within the Labour Party, within communist organisations, or as an independent party, as it wrestled with developing its distinct approach to social democracy, which it eventually defined in its 'guild socialist' constitution in 1922. The anguish it felt, and the conflict it faced, served it well for it is clear that between the end of the Great War and its Annual Easter Conference of 1922, it expanded its organisation, its representation in Parliament, its political philosophy and its political influence within the Labour Party. It was determined to remain an independent political party, educating and propagandising the wider Labour movement to the immediacy of applying a holistic approach to socialism, and eschewing compromise with capitalism.

Debating the future: communism, the Labour Party or independence?

Already, aware of its immediate challenge of the Labour Party, at the Annual Easter ILP Conference of 1918, held at Leicester, the NAC claimed that it 'never considered the constitution of the Labour Party to be satisfactory from a democratic point of view', largely because it was dominated by trade union wealth.² Indeed, it might have added the domination of the trade union elected members of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Labour Party. MacDonald put it more bluntly in the ILP's journal, *Socialist Review*, which he edited, in stating that 'the ILP pays pence, the Trade Unions pay pounds'.³ An NAC report of 1918 also suggested that whilst constituency Labour parties would have been in competition with ILP branches, the ILP saw itself as the intellectual spearhead of the Labour Party, though it [the Labour Party] looked often to the past rather than

the future.⁴ The ILP was considered to be looking to the future and, taking up the point, Philip Snowden noted, in his Chairman's speech to the ILP Annual Easter Conference of 1919, that the ILP was expanding as never before. Indeed, whilst wartime membership had declined from about 40,000 in 1914 to 27,000 in 1916, it had largely recovered by the end of the First World War, and between Easter 1918 and Easter 1919 it was reported that the ILP had formed 139 new branches and gained 11,000 new members, raising its total membership to 38,021 members in its 775 branches.⁵ The Scottish Federation had increased to over 5,000 members (though some estimates suggest that it was rapidly increasing to 10,000 members), helped by the failure of the 40 Hours strike in Glasgow, which had seen the imprisonment of Manny Shinwell, Willie Gallacher, David Murray and other ILP leaders, which encouraged a move from economic to political activity.⁶ The Yorkshire Division had 7,600 listed members, of whom nearly 6,000 were on the books and a quarter of whom were women.⁷ To Snowden, the ILP clearly had much work to do in shaping the New Order in Europe now that the Old Order was in tatters as thrones and dynasties had been overthrown.⁸ In a speech, replete with the religious language with which ILPers were familiar, he stated that

The Party is daily growing [its] reach mainly from the working classes but also from men and women of influence and reputation, who have lost faith in the old political parties, and who recognise in the Independent Labour Party a movement which expresses the economic, political and intellectual ideas and needs of the age. . . .

Slowly and peacefully humanity has climbed the hard road to the summit of Calvary, but the resurrection to the new life of freedom and brotherhood is at hand. Thrones and dynasties have been overthrown. Over two-thirds of Europe the Red Flag of Socialism, and with the blood of our martyred dead, floats where but yesterday despotism held the people in vile subjugation.⁹

Snowden went on further to suggest that the Labour Party was flawed 'in regards to such fundamental questions as civil liberty', and discuss the need to fight for the revolutionary views expressed in the song, 'The Red Flag', finishing with the idea that the slogan of the ILP was 'Democratic Left'.¹⁰

Despite the ILP's loss of primacy as the major socialist parliamentary party in Britain, the NAC of the ILP, with the widespread support of the branches, was intent to continue. However, it remained open to debate as to what type of socialist party it was going to be and how it was to act on the issues of democracy and civil liberties. This issue was in a process that pushed it into discussing its relations with the Third, or Communist, International, as well as the Labour Party, before introducing a new constitution in 1922, which was aimed at establishing true democracy in industrial and political matters, through guild socialism. Indeed, the branches debated different options, the Yorkshire and Bradford branches advocating a continuing alliance with Labour, whilst Burton-on-Trent and Ilford were to the fore in the defence of Russia and in hearing what George Lansbury had to say about his visit to Russia.¹¹ The ILP might have been relegated

in importance by the new socialist Labour Party, but it was in lively discussions about its future and was not ruined, as A. J. P. Taylor asserted.

Impelled by both a fast-growing membership and a belief that the Labour Party still had some way to go to be truly socialist, ILP branches debated their future – some wanting continued affiliation with the Labour Party, others wishing to impose some type of conditions on its continuation, a minority wanting to work with communists, and yet others favouring disaffiliation from the Labour Party and an independent existence. In this state of debate and indecision, the Yorkshire Divisional Federation of the ILP announced, on 18 August 1919, that it was going to hold a conference at which ‘It proposed to open discussion on the subject of Party policy, including such topics as “Direct Action” and the “Relationship of the ILP to the Labour Party”’. Every branch of the Federation is being urged to send delegates’.¹² That meeting overwhelmingly favoured the continuation of the ILP as a distinct political organisation and, at a further meeting of the Yorkshire branches held in February 1920, there was a mood of determination to continue and vigorously debate the issues of self-government for Ireland, old-age pensions, the Third International and the decision of some members to leave parliamentary politics.¹³ However, the issue of continued affiliation to the Labour Party or affiliation to some other organisation was left unresolved. There was less equivocation in a National ILP leaflet, released in 1920, which implied continued membership with the Labour Party, reminding it that it [the Labour Party] owed its very existence to the ILP and that, despite it now allowing individual membership, the ILP provided ‘a wider outlook’ from outside trade unionism.¹⁴

The clear message was that the ILP should continue to exist, but what was less certain is what form it should take and its future relationship with a Labour Party, whose socialist credentials it often questioned. The whole picture was clouded by further divisional preferences and local ties with the Labour Party. The ILP worked closely with the Labour Party in many areas, and Matthew Worley has emphasised that ‘In areas where trade unionism was weak and fractured, particularly in Scotland and parts of Yorkshire, the ILP was effectively the Labour Party for all intents and purposes’.¹⁵ Trade unionism was not sufficiently dominant to supersede ILP strength in those areas. This was very much the situation in Bradford, the birthplace of the ILP, where practically all the Labour councillors were members of the ILP and where trade unionism was weak. Also, at the Labour Party Scottish Division Conference in 1919, it was stated that ‘Ninety per cent of the propaganda of the Labour Party is being carried out in Scotland by individuals who have joined the ILP. . . . And 75 per cent of the Election work is done by them’.¹⁶ The rest, apparently, was done by the trade unions.

The established and traditional leadership of the ILP, however, re-asserted the basic core values of the ILP – parliamentary and municipal democracy, associated with educational work – as they faced an uncertain future. In an ILP Memorandum circulated by Philip Snowden (Chairman), T. D. Benson (Treasurer) and Francis Johnson (Secretary), on 29 August 1919, addressed to the Members of the ILP, is indicative of a strategy of re-asserting what the ILP had always been about.

It reminded members that the role values of the ILP were to create a Socialist Commonwealth, and that

The policy of the ILP remains what it has been from the beginning, namely, the education of the people in the use of the Parliamentary and municipal vote so that they will seize the control of Parliament and of municipal bodies and through these institutions transform public service into collective institutions carried on by the State (including municipalities and industrial associations) for the common, and as far as possible, the equal happiness of all.¹⁷

It went on to remind its members that the BSP and the SLP wanted the ‘overthrow of the Parliamentary institution and the existing local government, and devote their efforts to the organisation of the working classes for a revolution of force, to be followed, if successful, by the dictatorship of the proletariat’. To this, the ILP, it claimed, was not attuned. Indeed, even though it was soon to leave the Second International of reformist parties, a Draft Memorandum of the ILP on Socialism and Government, for submission to the Geneva Congress, and produced in February 1920, challenged the notion that Bolshevism was the only way in which to bring about socialism and stated that ‘The Soviet form of Government is not the best form for an industrial democracy, though it is a very efficient revolutionary form’.¹⁸

Nevertheless, there remained the alternative possibilities of the ILP joining the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), formed in 1920, and affiliating to the Third International, which had been formed in Moscow in 1919, or of leaving the Labour Party and making its own national and international policies. In 1920 the strongest of these seemed to be that of making some arrangement with the communists. In 1920 the Scottish Divisional Council of the ILP voted by 158 votes to 28 in favour of affiliating to the Third International.¹⁹ They were driven in that direction partly because of the support that the ILP was giving to Soviet Russia at that time, where Britain was giving support to the White Russians in the civil war between the White Russians and the Red Russians. Indeed, as early as January 1919, the NAC had called for the ‘immediate withdrawal of the troops from Russia’.²⁰ This had led to the ‘Hands off Russia Campaign’, organised mainly by Harry Pollitt and emerging CPGB, and to which many ILPers were drawn. Indeed, the Glasgow ILP Federation had helped to set up a ‘Hands off Russia’ campaign in Glasgow.²¹ The Edinburgh ILP also favoured closer co-operation with the Marxist organisations, supporting the organisation of a conference with the BSP, SLP and other socialist bodies in the summer of 1919.²²

Prior to the 1920 Glasgow Annual ILP Easter Conference, about 200 people, not all of them ILP members, met in a ‘Third International gathering’, and the delegates to this meeting agreed to meet together to support an affiliation to the Third International during the Conference.²³ Enthusiastic for the Bolshevik Revolution, and led by David Kirkwood, the ‘Left Wing of the ILP’ group, as they became known, won the Conference’s approval to ‘send fraternal greetings to the Russian Socialist Republic’. They clearly exerted an impact upon

events for the Conference and voted to leave the Second International, which had been revived to bring together socialist reformist parties, by 529 votes to 144, thus putting it into conflict with the Labour Party which was affiliated to it. However, a resolution favouring affiliation to the Third International was defeated, as it was strongly opposed by the majority of delegates led by the Yorkshire delegates, Philip Snowden and Manny Shinwell, and gained only 206 votes, presumably from many of those who had met on the eve of the Conference.²⁴ These decisions, rejecting both the Second International and the Third International, led to the Conference decision to work with the Swiss (Socialist) Party ‘regarding the possibility of the re-establishment of an all-inclusive International’, which eventually became known as the Vienna Union.²⁵ However, after a speech by Clifford Allen, supported by R. C. Wallhead, urging such a course of action, the Conference decided to open a dialogue with the Third International about the terms of possible affiliation and to pursue the possibility of an all-inclusive International.

Allen, who had become a member of the NAC, along with R. C. Wallhead, had recently visited Russia with a Labour Party/TUC group and came to accept the need for the ‘Dictatorship of the Proletariat’ on the argument that democracy could only be meaningful when economic equality was established.²⁶ Wallhead, who replaced Snowden as Chairman of the NAC at this Conference, had defended the Bolsheviks in 1918 but was more cautious by 1920 when he could only accept the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ as temporarily expedient.²⁷ Nevertheless, on 25 May 1920, Allen and Wallhead sent a letter to the Third International on behalf of the NAC, listing 12 questions to which they asked for a response, the essence of which was clarification on the Third International’s attitude towards the parliamentary system, whether the acceptance of communism was a condition of being a member of Third International and whether or not membership of the Third International would be allowed for parties whose approach to achieving socialism was different to that proposed by communist parties.²⁸ The ILP published the Third International’s response as *The Reply to the ILP*, which was a bitter diatribe on the recent history of socialist internationalism, condemning parliamentary politics and trade union negotiation as having allowed the middle class to delay change by offering palliatives that altered little, meaning that Labour and the ILP lost touch with the ‘wider unskilled masses, the toiling poor, they have become oblivious of capitalist exploitation and the revolutionary cause of the proletariat’.²⁹ In addressing the ‘British ILP’ on the question of other forms of socialism, the Third International was adamant that ‘there was no other form, there is only Communism’.³⁰ The ILP, and similar social democratic parties, clearly had no place in the world of the Third International, its EC stating that

The emancipation of the British working class and of all the working class of the whole world would depend upon the Communist elements of England forming a single Communist Party. We therefore say to the British Communists who appeal to the International proletariat to unite with the Communist International.³¹

Those in the ILP supporting the idea of affiliation with the Third International, which had initially included Allen and Wallhead, as already indicated, had formed the 'Left Wing (Group) of the ILP' at this time, endorsed affiliation to the Third International, and set up the *Internationalist*, a fortnightly paper. The first issue, of June 1920, contained an article from J. T. Walton Newbold (later a communist MP) who, in his article 'The Task before Us', appealed for ILP to be at the centre of the CPGB.³² However, this was clearly not going to occur, and the ILP reply to the Third International's earlier response, published as the *ILP and the Third International*, focused upon the prospect of disaffiliation from the Labour Party, the fear of war, the risks to democracy and the need to preserve social democracy.³³ The ILP was clearly not happy at the prospect of being subject to the democratic centralism of the Third International, which implied the acceptance of the decisions of the leadership, as it was about the prospect of being subject to a Labour Party dominated by the trade union block vote. By August 1920, Clifford Allen could not recommend unconditional membership to the TI, wanting an answer from it as to whether or not 'violence as a means of attaining power shall be open for the decision of each national party'.³⁴

Such doubts were intensified by E. C. Fairchild's article, 'Travesty of Communism', which appeared in the *Labour Leader* on 5 August 1920. Fairchild had previously been a member of the BSP and editor of its weekly paper, *The Call*, where he clashed with Theodore Rothstein over the 'soviet system' and had become disillusioned with communism. His opposition to affiliation to the Third International gained widespread support from throughout the ILP when the ILP also published a pamphlet, *The Communist International*, listing the 21 conditions that had to be met in order to join the Third International, which effectively demanded the acceptance of its decisions and thus the end of social democracy. Francis Johnson (General Secretary of the ILP from 1904 until 1924) feared that the CPGB wished to simply detach from existing socialist parties those who would accept the Bolshevik basis of dictatorship.³⁵ Ramsay MacDonald made much the same point at this time: 'It is now clear that to affiliate to the Third International the Independent Labour Party would have to change entirely its aims, its structure, and its personnel. It would cease to be the Independent Labour Party'.³⁶ By now, Allen and Wallhead found no comfort in the didactic tone of the lengthy replies to the ILP questions, shortened in ILP pamphlets, though the ILP Left group declared that it was seeking to change the ILP Constitution in order make it a communist organisation, and the Left produced its own programme for the immediate affiliation of the ILP to the Third International.³⁷ These protracted negotiations with the Third International did not help the ILP and may have contributed to the defeat of Ramsay MacDonald in the Woolwich parliamentary by-election in 1921, and certainly led Katherine Bruce Glasier, the editor of *Labour Leader*, to become more critical of Bolshevik plans. The embattled negotiations between the ILP and the Third International began to change the attitudes of many ILPers. Indeed, the votes of the divisional councils moved strongly against affiliation to the Third International in January 1921. The previously supportive Scottish Divisional Council rejected affiliation by 93 votes to 57, Yorkshire by 64 to 16 and

Lancashire by 114 votes to 18.³⁸ In Lancashire the vote may have been influenced by a long-standing dispute over communist control of ILP property in both Barrow and Liverpool, which led Elijah Sandham to appeal to the NAC for financial help in order to pay for legal assistance in April 1921.³⁹

Wallhead, who chaired the 1921 Annual Easter Conference of the ILP, held at Southport in 1921, used his address to report upon his visit to Russia to meet the representatives of the Third International and firmly opposed affiliation to it, condemning the 'Left' ILP group whom he felt 'should leave and join an organisation to which they can honestly give their allegiance'.⁴⁰ He was supported by George Benson, of the North Salford ILP, who felt that some of the 21 points for membership to the Third International were disruptive.⁴¹ The 'Moscow amendment', committing the ILP to affiliation to the Third International, was defeated by 521 votes to 97, and the defeated 'Left' walked out of the Conference.⁴² The Chorley branch of the ILP then changed the direction of the Conference to the Labour Party and wanted the Labour Party to prepare a plan for power which would commit to it making no secret agreements, organising an international conference to abolish armaments, the introduction of self-determination for all parts of the British Empire, social ownership of lands, railways, shipping and banking, a needed educational system, the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords, and the move towards capitalism. The implication was that some type of conditions would be applied to the Labour Party for the ILP's continued affiliation. In contrast, the Clyde branch of the ILP put forward a motion declaring that 'the time opportune to sever connections with the Labour Party'.⁴³

Once again, the focus was placed upon the ILP relationship with the Labour Party, particularly after the loss of 500 to 1,000 members of the Left, many of whom defected from ILP branches in London, although there were some losses in all parts of Britain. Indeed, the Yorkshire Divisional Council reported at its half-yearly meeting in September 1921 that 'Yorkshire branches had been slightly affected by the Communist split though three branches had seceded two had re-organised'.⁴⁴ Philip Snowden, talking to the Yorkshire Division at Otley Chevin, reflected the mood of many ILPers, particularly in Yorkshire, that the ILP still had a role within the Labour Party for 'It, the Labour Party, had still to develop its Socialist faith and soul. Until this was also achieved, there was room for the ILP and great work for it to do'.⁴⁵

Having rejected affiliation to the Third International and being concerned about the direction of the Labour Party, the ILP now focused more upon its commitment to an 'all-inclusive international', which it had agreed upon at its 1920 Annual Conference. It increasingly pinned its hopes on the International Working Union of Socialist Parties (IWUSP), often known as the Vienna Unions or the 2½ International, which it formed with the German Independent Socialist Party, the French Socialist Party and the Spanish Party, the ILP, and six other parties on 27 February 1921 at a conference held in Vienna. The ILP representatives to the Vienna Union were not convinced that it met fully the demands of the ILP but concluded that since the gulf between it and Third International was too wide that 'Vienna, we believe, represents the best policy', and worked with it for just over two years.⁴⁶

From the start the Vienna Union opposed the dogmatism of both the Second and Third Internationals but sent its delegates to meet with them, in the Conference of the Three Internationals, held in Berlin, between 2 and 5 April 1921.⁴⁷ However, unity was not achieved, as the delegates of the Third International withdrew from the talks. Wallhead, as Chairman of the ILP, went to Frankfurt on 8–10 July to meet the Executive of the IWUSP, to discuss the possibilities of organising another conference of all three internationals, and it was later hoped that the Vienna Union would also become involved in a French-inspired conference on the issue of reparations.⁴⁸ Indeed, a meeting of the International Working of Socialist Parties was held in London between 17–21 October 1921, though little progress was made.⁴⁹ The Vienna Union met in Paris in February 1922 and suggested, once again, a conference to bring both reformist and revolutionary socialists together inside one international, and it was decided here that ‘If Moscow refused then the Vienna Union and the Second International work towards a rapprochement’.⁵⁰ The Second International met on 23 February 1922 and the Vienna Union, soon afterwards, prepared for a conference on 26 February to be on ‘Economic conditions in Europe with special reference to reparations’, to which the Italians would come along if it was broadened out. In the widest form the British, French, Germans, Italians and Russians would be involved. However, the Russians did not send delegates and the Vienna Union became increasingly impotent and began to break up, with the German Socialist Party uniting with the German Social Democratic Party (SDP), which was associated with another international organisation known as the Berne International. The ILP became increasingly frustrated with both the limited influence and the limited funds of Vienna, which Wallhead felt meant that it was ‘not in a position to be as business-like as he would like to see it’.⁵¹ The ILP pressed for the Vienna Union to organise another attempt to bring all three internationals together between 17–21 October 1921, when a meeting of the International Working Union of Socialist Parties was held in the ILP’s London Office, attended by Adler (Austria), Grimm (Germany), Ledbour (Germany), Longuet (France), Wallhead (ILP), Brocke (France), Kaplansky (Poale Zion) and Shinwell (ILP). It discussed the possibilities of forming an international and referred to the dangers of imperialism in India and other countries, the need to support German socialism and the starvation in Russia, and it reiterated the need to organise an all-inclusive international organisation and the need to desert the Second International. It asked the Labour Party to join it and do the same, but Arthur Henderson, replying for the Labour Party, accused the Vienna Union object as being ‘to prevent any substantial progress towards International Unity’ until the communists modified their views and became more co-operative.⁵² The ILP and the Labour Party met to discuss the Vienna Union on 16 November, and other negotiations continued, but the Labour Party was resistant. As negotiations went into 1922, the Second International placed conditions on meeting the Third International, and some of the nine members of the Vienna Union, meeting at Amsterdam in June 1922, were not willing to meet the Second International.⁵³

Eventually, discouraged by the intransigent position of the Third International, the IWUSP and the Second International merged in May 1923 at a joint congress to

form the Labour and Socialist International (LSI). Despite its failure to form an all-inclusive international of socialist and communist parties, the ILP continued with this venture and was later active in the formation of the London Bureau in 1931, initially called the Committee of Independent Revolutionary Socialist Parties.

In the end the ILP was unable to accept a merger with the CPGB, on the conditions set by the Third International, or affiliation to the Third International, and the question continued to be – what should its future role be? Should it disband? Should it remain within the Labour Party? These were questions which were to plague the ILP throughout the 1920s and to lead to its disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1932. In the early 1920s, relations with the Labour Party remained a continuing issue, and at the end of 1921 a meeting between the NEC, dominated by Ramsay MacDonald, and the representatives of the nine divisional councils of the ILP took place to address it. The *Labour Leader* reflected upon this meeting in an article entitled ‘Position or Party Defined’. It stated that ‘The continued existence of the ILP is necessary if the Socialist movement is to be maintained in this country’, that the ILP should remain within the Labour Party educating its members, educating those who were not its members and re-establishing those links with the trade union movement which had once been so vital in its early years.⁵⁴ There were, of course, constant issues in operating with the Labour Party, not least the problem of working with the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). In 1922, Neil Maclean, ILP MP for Glasgow Govan found it impossible to be controlled and directed by the PLP meetings and refused to work with the PLP, even when beseeched to do so in a meeting with Morgan Jones and Tom Myers, both ILP MPs, and Col. Wedgewood.⁵⁵

The move towards the guild socialist ILP constitution of 1922

Nevertheless, having resolved to stay in the Labour Party, the ILP became much more concerned about its future constitution within the context of how socialism was to be brought about. Central to this was the debate about the ideas of guild socialism, advocated by the National Guilds League (NGL) and taken up, or partly taken up, by leading members of the ILP such as Ramsay MacDonald, Clifford Allen and Clem Attlee.

MacDonald was a central figure in the ILP’s post-war discussions. He had lost his parliamentary seat at Leicester, which he had held since 1906, in the 1918 general election, but was then deeply involved in the activities of the ILP up to his return as Labour MP for Aberavon in 1922, at which time he also became Chairman of the PLP, and thus Leader of the Labour Party. As a non-trade unionist, he was not in the closest ties with the trade unions and still needed the ILP to bolster his claim to become Leader of the Labour Party, which he won. Indeed, only Jimmy Maxton, of the Clydeside group of 14 or so ILP MPs, did not vote for him in his narrowly won leadership contest against J. R. Clynes. Yet even in the ILP there were doubts about him, arising from the fact that MacDonald had become secretary of the Second International, which led to his censure by the NAC before he got them to change their minds.⁵⁶

MacDonald had written extensively on his view of social democracy and how it was to be achieved in the plethora of books written for the ILP's 'Socialist Library' series, which he also edited.⁵⁷ The crux of much of his work, although he was always refining his views, was the Fabian organic and evolutionary view of society in which industry grew to such a scale that it was inevitable that the state would take over, although this did not fully chime with the community-centred approach of the ILP in areas such as the textile district of West Yorkshire, which emphasised local democracy rather than the duties of state citizenship. However, the major influence he had on the ILP was his commitment to the parliamentary democracy which would make it difficult for the ILP to ever come to terms with communist and revolutionary ideas and create the problem of trying to overcome the problem that a democratic parliamentary system could ever deliver a permanent socialist state. Reacting to the rising industrial conflict and syndicalism in Britain on the eve of the First World War, MacDonald assumed the Fabian stance of suggesting that industry would expand, have to be controlled by the state and a body of experienced industrialists not tainted by a personal interest in profit, that trade unions would act in an advisory role, and that society would move towards an almost guild socialist position where consumer and producer cooperation would 'blend together'.⁵⁸ MacDonald's commitment to parliamentary representation made it difficult for him to contemplate the need for direct action, except in possibly protecting a socialist democratic majority being overthrown by a capitalist minority, and his brief flirtation with such views after the 1919 Labour Party conference did not last.⁵⁹ In the end, MacDonald reflected on the conundrum facing the ILP – how was socialism to be established and, once established, maintained whilst operating through a parliamentary system subject to a fickle and volatile electorate.

MacDonald was relatively conservative in his ideas on how socialism would be achieved and the power of Parliament and the state, his ideas becoming perhaps more conservative immediately after the Great War.⁶⁰ He came to reject the idea of direct democracy through referendums and proportional representation and Jowett's ideas for parliamentary reform of replacing the power of ministers in the Cabinet with the power of parliamentary committees, but he seems to have favoured some greater accountability of ministers to Parliament. He contemplated, as most socialists did, the end of the House of Lords, and its replacement with a democratically elected second chamber of guilds, unions, professions and trades. Many of these ideas emerged in his book, *Parliament and Revolution*, published in 1919, at the time when Bolshevik's ideas were being openly discussed alongside others connected with the creation of a socialist state.⁶¹

MacDonald's emerging ideas appealed to many in the ILP, such as Allen and Salter, who were not at all convinced that Bolshevik methods would work in Britain but who were prepared to consider the idea of some type of industrial representation in the future British socialist state.⁶² He even contemplated devolution for Scotland and Wales, and also regional rights for England.⁶³ However, in the end, he was essentially negotiating his, almost flirtatious, way through the debates about the Marxist and soviet system, guild socialism, and operating

through a modified version of the existing parliamentary system driven by the need to ensure that democratic views were preserved and extended, dismissing en route the restrictive democracy of Marxism and the restrictive and unrepresentative nature of parliamentary democracy in Britain. To some ILPers, MacDonald's attempt to get back into Parliament, through his unsuccessful contesting of the Woolwich East parliamentary by-election in 1921 (the former safe Labour seat of Will Crooks), was the result of the divisive attacks upon him made by the communists and the Left Wing of the ILP.⁶⁴

Acting as a star speaker for both the ILP and the Labour Party during the early 1920s, and editing the ILP's *Socialist Review*, MacDonald was a major figure in parliamentary socialist politics. It was only at that point, when he was returned as MP for Aberavon and then became Leader of the Labour Party that he switched his loyalties to the Labour Party and, as the 1920s progressed, became estranged from it, though Allen, as Chairman of the ILP between 1923 and 1925, shielded him and the first Labour government from much of the criticism about its gradualist nature. Under Maxton's chairmanship though, from 1926 onwards, MacDonald found himself frequently in conflict with the ILP and ceased to be a member in 1930, three years after the departure of Philip Snowden, his main political rival in both ILP and Labour Party politics.

Some of MacDonald's ideas were transmitted into the ILP through Clifford Allen, who became interested in guild socialist ideas during the First World War, and into the 1922 Constitution. Allen was the person who gave the ILP a clear purpose in the days of doubt in the early 1920s. Brockway has written that there 'I began to doubt whether there was a future for the ILP' but reflected that 'Clifford Allen ended this defeatism. He believed the ILP had a great future as an educational and activist force for Socialism and peace'.⁶⁵ Allen hoped to provide a new role through the industrial democracy and guild socialist ideas he believed in and in which the movement has already showed interest.⁶⁶

Underpinning the discussion about industrial democracy was G. D. H. Cole who, with his wife Margaret, had been an editor of *Guildsman*, the organ of the National Guilds League (NGL), which published from 1915 to 1923. His views had been paraded before ILP members with his ILP pamphlet, *Workers' Control in Industry*, which offered a view of society which stood between syndicalism and state socialism.⁶⁷ Its ideas became embodied in the committee formed at the 1920 ILP Annual Easter Conference, and chaired by MacDonald, which met eight times to draft a new party programme which appeared in the *Labour Leader* of 23 December 1920 in tandem with the communist views of the rival Provisional National Committee of the Left Wing of the ILP, MacDonald writing that 'The Guild Socialist as well as the democrat who suspects that the Labour Government will be sabotaged by bourgeois conspirators ought to find both freedom and room for useful work in the Party, provided they enter as co-operative and not as disruptive members'.⁶⁸

The struggle to formulate a new constitution for the ILP was essentially a conflict between three main groups. The first was the Provisional Committee of the Left Wing, which, as already suggested, wished to make the ILP a communist organisation but found itself struggling as it failed to win support for affiliation to

the Third International at the 1921 ILP Conference, with many of its supporters leaving for the communist party. Secondly, there were those such as Fred Jowett, Willie Leach, and the Bradford ILP, who constantly focused upon municipal and parliamentary politics, though they were faced with increasing scepticism about the value of bourgeois control of Parliament. Thirdly, there were those who veered towards some sort of industrial strategy who hoped to prevent the ILP from becoming merely a state socialist organisation, Allen being a foremost advocate of such ideas. The last of these groups was boosted by the MacDonald Sub-Committee report, included in the NAC report in 1921. It emphasised the need to bring workers' control to the fore and to avoid the bureaucratisation of socialisation that state control would bring. It was an inconclusive discussion which merged into another discussion about the relations with the Labour Party and the soviet system of government, whose only achievement was to unify in the broad general desire to bring peace by destroying imperialism.⁶⁹ No definite programme for a constitution emerged, and prominent rising young figures in the ILP, particularly Clem Attlee, pressured for a definite programme to be placed before the 1922 ILP Annual Conference.⁷⁰

The new programme began to emerge in an article in September 1921 when the *Labour Leader* suggested that 'The ILP believes in democratic organisation both in its political and industrial aspects, for communal ends', stressing the dual demand of industrial democracy to be the organisation of wage and salary earners and the organisation of consumers.⁷¹ The idea was that nationalisation and municipalisation, the Fabian solutions, were being downgraded for a bottom-up type of approach. This caused considerable debate up to the 1922 Easter Conference of the ILP, at which Allen and Attlee pressed for the presentation of a draft report with its emphasis upon workers' control against Wallhead, Snowden, MacDonald and Walter H. Ayles and Shinwell, who were drafting the report on the new constitution to be submitted to the Conference, which was less committed to workers' control.⁷² Much political debate surrounded the Allan-Attlee proposals, particularly in Bradford and in the divisional meetings of the ILP.⁷³ Harold Croft, a one-time divisional organiser in the Midlands, who had become agent and organiser of Croydon Labour Party, advocated for the creation of 'an ILP parish' in every area where propaganda and educational activities would be promoted in 'weekly meeting halls' but offered little in the way of clarity to the main debate.⁷⁴ Towards the end of December 1921 the Bradford ILP 'succeeded without bloodshed' in offering alternatives to the NAC proposed re-drafts of its constitution, the 'Bradford Alternative', in which it stated that

It will be noted that the chief features of what we may now call the Bradford Alternative Re-draft is the insistence on the ILP's place as a propagandist body, and the distinction of its functions from those of the Labour Party in consequence.⁷⁵

This was followed by its commitment to a socialist state based upon parliamentary rule.

The ILP meandered towards finding its new and distinct approach to socialism but eventually arrived at a new constitution. Wallhead, chairing the 1922 ILP Annual Easter Conference, suggested that the ILP could not opt for ‘voluntary liquidation’ until socialism became accepted by the people of the country.⁷⁶ The ‘Bradford amendment’, advocating a parliamentary approach and a commitment to the central belief in common ownership and the control of the means of life, was presented and debated by Harry Wilson, after which Willie Leach condemned guild socialism in his wringing comment that

Last came G.D. H. Cole, a very brilliant person who writes a book about every twenty-five minutes. He had spoken to the NAC in a new language and they fell down and worshipped. They were desperately afraid to be called old fogies.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, Cole’s ideas, which were referred to as a ‘sort of alliance between the Cockneys and the Clyde’, won the day, and the Bradford amendment was defeated by 231 votes to 127. Even Major Attlee spoke against the Bradford amendment, stating that ‘The Bradford conception of Socialism appeared to be a glorified municipality’.⁷⁸

The serious debates over the Bradford amendment, and the Limehouse and the Gateshead amendments, all of which varied over the importance of citizenship and the industrial power of the workers, and clarity and direction came from MacDonald who suggested that the final wording of the new constitution, which would deal with the need for a transition period for giving the workers of industry effective control be left to the NAC. A mixture of forces and people shaped the final constitution. The transition period, drafted by the NAC and the Allen-Attlee sections, dominated the Internationalism and Imperialism section, and most of the section on ‘Method’. The final constitution, which appears as Appendix 1, suggested a form of guild socialism. Essentially it was one which advocated the ideas of G. D. H. Cole, A. J. Penty and A.R. Orage, whereby a democratic system representing the consumer set targets of production to be met by industrial production under workers; control, theoretically representing individuals as producers and consumers, thus creating a balance and harmony in society.⁷⁹ In the end, the 30th Annual Conference of the ILP 1922 launched the new constitution advocated by Allen and Attlee (sometimes referred to as the London or Limehouse constitution), which accepted the ‘organisation of the wage and salary earners’ and ‘the organisation of the consumers’ as the basis for industrial democracy.⁸⁰ It advocated measures and legislation to prevent the continuance and restoration of capitalism, and envisioned an international world of free economies trading with each other. It was also replete with the usual emphasis upon public ownership of the means of production. This new constitution ushered in the brief-lived chairmanship of the ILP by Clifford Allen.

With its all-embracing approach, providing opportunities for workers’ control of industry and industrial production, the ILP moved quickly to propagandise both the trade unions and the Party, and gained some support. The Lancashire (Number

9) divisional conference at Blackpool advocated its move towards promoting workers' control.⁸¹ Maxton, representing Scottish ILP interests, produced *Twenty Points for Socialism*, which argued that public ownership should be accompanied by workers' control.⁸² Yet guild socialism never captured the imagination of the trade unions or the working class. And there was also significant opposition to it within the ILP. Indeed, in the Scottish Division, both Patrick Dollan was opposed to it as was Manny Shinwell in later years. A debate in the *Socialist Review* saw William Leach, of Bradford, challenge the notion of dividing people into producers and consumers and favoured public ownership run by elected committees, issues on which he was countered by Attlee in another article.⁸³ Four years later the ILP Annual Easter Conference of 1926 received a report from the ILP's Industrial Committee, which included Margaret Bondfield and threw doubt on the value of workers' committees and workers' control in the organisation of public ownership, although it was considered preferable to private control. This was at a time when it became clear that existing forms of socialism and guild socialism were not going to bring about the 'Socialism in Our Time' policy and commitment of the mid-1920s. Eventually, MacDonald and Attlee were to move off from the ILP into the Labour Party where public or state ownership of the means of production was the preferred means of establishing a socialist state. However, in the immediate post-war years, debates about the way to bring about socialism were fought against a background of increasing support for the ILP in what was a precarious period of its existence.

The organisational growth of the ILP

Nearly four years of debate left its mark on the ILP, and certainly members were lost to communism and to the Labour Party. Nevertheless, the ILP grew rapidly between the Easter of 1918 and the Easter of 1919 and, despite the debates over its future, sustained a slow and steady, albeit precarious, rate of growth thereafter. This revival was born of a driving emphasis upon propaganda to improve organisation, and a desire to be more comprehensive and inclusive. As early as January 1918 an 'ILP survey of its position', produced by Philip Snowden and Francis Johnson, emphasised the 'Need to pay more attention to women. The Needs for Organisational Registers needs updating. Resumption of Municipal Elections in 1918 and therefore action must be taken'.⁸⁴ As a result of these general findings, it argued that branch handbooks had to be updated, that the Information Committee, which distributed advice to ILP speakers and members on various political and economic questions, was urged into action, for the ILP had to be seen to be alive. Francis Johnson added, in a separate report, that 'Lukewarm branches, or branches at sea, ought to be stirred by giving the feeling that the ILP is alive and big'.⁸⁵ In anticipation of the 1918 general election, the NAC also began to consider which parliamentary constituencies it would contest, though this had little impact as the results of that general election saw leading figures such as MacDonald (at Leicester), Jowett (Bradford West), and Snowden (Blackburn) lose their parliamentary seats, as the Party was reduced from eight (though some sources

Table 2.1 Organising grants to divisions decided in the financial year ending in February of each year, and affiliation fees, 1910–1919⁸⁶

<i>Year</i>	<i>Organising grants</i>	<i>Affiliation fees</i>
	£	£
1910	672	1,525
1911	641	1,314
1912	772	1,177
1913	582	1,084
1914	522	1,050
1915	376	936
1916	479	812
1917	560	864
1918	627	1,202
1919	1042	1,631

suggest nine) to two (sometimes indicated as three) seats.⁸⁷ In addition, there was success for Tom Myers (Spenn Valley by-election, 1919), Morgan Jones (Caerphilly, 1921), and George Benton (Leicester East, 1922). As will be established later, the situation was to improve dramatically at the 1922 general election, when a large number of the Clydeside/Glasgow ILP MPs were returned as MPs. An ILP Memorandum circulated by Snowden (Chairman), T. D. Benson (Treasurer) and Johnson (Secretary), representing the old parliamentary democracy school of ILP leaders, on 29 August 1919, already referred to as an attempt to stave off the revolutionaries, stressed the improving position of the ILP, after the dip in fortunes at the beginning of the Great War, as indicated in Table 2.1.

The report, which seems to have lumped two divisions together, indicates that in August 1919 there were 775 branches, 342 paying fees and 433 not paying fees, with 38,021 members. By far the largest number of branches were to be found in Division 1, Scotland, which had 7,339 members on the books in 223 branches, and whilst the majority of them (162 of the branches) were not paying fees in 1919, it was paying £34 5s 8d of the overall fee payments to the NAC of £126 8s 3d, a quarter of the total. It alone was paying well over twice the fees of any other eight divisions of the ILP, reflecting its growth and success at the end of the First World War.⁸⁸

Despite the recovery of the ILP from 1916, it was clear that it was one of slow improvement in finances and membership, studded by the occasional losses of membership and loss of income connected with the debates over the future direction of the ILP. MacDonald, in the 1919 Organisation Report, had made the point that ‘Very few branches make special efforts to secure new members,’⁸⁹ Nevertheless, membership reached 45,000 and hovered around that figure for about six years before declining sharply, although it is clear that more than half of the branches did not pay fees to the National ILP. The real growth, as suggested, occurred in Division 1, the Scottish Division, and whilst nationally the Party

attracted disaffected Liberals and pacifists, in Glasgow, the rising centre of ILP strength, the ILP attracted skilled engineers, shipbuilders and textile workers, and a sizeable body of clerks, teachers and small traders. As a result, ILP membership doubled from 1,370 to 2,641 between 1917 and 1920, meaning that that Glasgow area alone accounted for more than a third of the Scottish ILP membership and about 6 per cent of the membership of the ILP nationally.⁹⁰ This was to mean that Scotland became the real powerhouse of the ILP during the inter-war years, increasingly dominating the NAC and the Party as a whole from 1922 onwards when its increases in membership were followed by impressive parliamentary successes.

There were, however, serious financial burdens connected with organizing the party, its newspapers and candidates for parliamentary elections. The National Labour Press, which produced the *Labour Leader* and other socialist and Labour newspapers, was in deep financial troubles, which led the ILP to consider taking over complete control of the *Labour Leader*, which was losing money, £11 per week March 1922, and a loss of £9,000 for the year.⁹¹ It also led the ILP to discuss the liabilities of the National Labour Press, of which it was part owner, which had risen to £72,978 by August 1922, including £1,000 to be paid for a libel case mounted by J. H. Thomas against it. Its assets were just £8,813 and it was able to reduce its deficit, by creative accounting, to £14,169.⁹² The NAC also became involved in operating the Northampton Boot Society, which it and the Northampton ILP bought for £250, which was often in deficit.⁹³

In 1918 the NAC allocated £100 to each candidate at the general election but, in May 1922, faced with rising financial difficulties, it decided to allocate only £50 per candidate for the ‘coming general election’ of 1922.⁹⁴ At the same meeting, the NAC Treasurer (the newly-elected Clifford Allen who had replaced Philip Snowden at the 1922 Conference) stated that there was practically no reserve fund, and he proposed approaching about 50 people with a view to getting them to guarantee “£10,000 in order to get a reserve fund. He also suggested levying a tax on collections taken by branches for funds other than those promoted by the Party.”⁹⁵

Conclusion

Nevertheless, between 1918 and 1922, the ILP made some significant progress. First of all, it convinced itself that it still had a distinct role to play in the creation of a socialist state in Britain. Secondly, this effectively meant offering different policies from those offered by the newly socialist Labour Party and a possible veering away from the socialism of the founding fathers of the ILP. But this was to take it into emphasising workers’ control and guild socialism, which was designed to solve the economic and social problems of society. The trouble is that, whilst the 1922 Constitution was a neat solution to squaring its political and industrial policies, it was an unpopular balancing act and held no widespread appeal within the British labour and socialist movement. Guild socialism obtained some support

for the ILP for a few years, and brought Allen and his middle-class friends to the fore, but did not flow into the mainstream of British left-wing politics, a fact which many, including Maxton and the Clydesiders, soon came to realise. The folding of the National Guilds' League in 1923 reflected the limited interest in guild socialism. It was more than a decade before the ILP began to recognise that fact and change tack. Nevertheless, on the basis of debating its future, the ILP was able to build up its organisational strength, and the 1922 general election, following the introduction of its 1922 Constitution, saw it make the biggest breakthrough in its history. Its parliamentary successes in the 1922 general election augured well for what seemed a new age under Allen's leadership, but, in the end, it was to prove illusory and short-lived.

Notes

- 1 A. J. P. Taylor, *English History, 1914–1945*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970, p. 131.
- 2 *NAC Report 1918*, p. 16.
- 3 J. Ramsay MacDonald, 'The ILP and the Labour Party', *Socialist Review; A Quarterly Review of Modern Thought* (April–June 1918), 120.
- 4 *NAC Report 1918*, pp. 16–17.
- 5 For membership figures look at NAC, Report of the Organizational Department, April–September 1919.
- 6 Glasgow ILP Federation Minutes, 18 April 1919.
- 7 ILP 9–4 Head Office circulars, returns from John Arnott, Organizing Secretary of the Yorkshire Division, 5–6 April branch reports. There were 41 branches in Yorkshire, with 5,738 men and 1,862 women, a total of 7,600, of whom 5,900 were 'good on the books', although only 3,991 stamps had been issued.
- 8 Philip Snowden, *Prospect and Retrospect: The 27th Presidential Address at the Easter Conference 1919*, Manchester and London, National Labour Press, 1919, p. 2. Also, for membership figures look at NASC 3/11, Report of the Organizational Department, April–September 1919.
- 9 Snowden, *Prospect and Retrospect*, pp. 2 and 5.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 5 and 12.
- 11 Burton-on-Trent ILP Branch Minutes, 11 November 1918; Ilford ILP Branch Minutes. 17 March 1920.
- 12 Francis Johnson Collection, ILP Archive, letter from F. J., which could be F. Johnson or Fred Jowett, dated 9 September 1919.
- 13 *Leeds Citizen*, 13 February 1920.
- 14 *The Need for the ILP*, ILP Leaflet 1920. Also, Bullock, *Under Siege*, pp. 28–9, draws smaller quotations from this and draws in Dowse's criticism of the 'patronising posture' of the ILP, acting as some form of divine authority on socialism.
- 15 Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party Between the Wars*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2005, p. 10.
- 16 Labour Party (Scottish Division) Conference, 1919, *Report*, p. 21.
- 17 NAC, contained within the Minutes, *ILP Memorandum* circulated on 29 August 1919.
- 18 NAC, Draft Memorandum of ILP on Socialism and Government, for submission to the Geneva Congress, February 1920.
- 19 *Labour Leader*, 8 January 1920. Also see Ian Bullock, *Romancing the Revolution: The Myth of Soviet Democracy and the British Left*, Edmonton, Athabasca University Press, 2011. chapter 8 on 'The ILP and the Third International: crucial test of belief in Soviet Democracy.

- 20 NAC of the ILP Minutes, 11 January 1919,
- 21 Glasgow ILP Federation Minutes, 17 October 1919.
- 22 Edinburgh ILP Minutes, 19 June 1919.
- 23 *Labour Leader*, 8 April 1920.
- 24 Bullock, *Under Siege*, pp. 31–2.
- 25 *Labour Leader*, 8 April and 29 July 1920.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 25 March 1920.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 29 January 1920.
- 28 *Moscow's Reply to the ILP*, London, ILP, 1920, pp. 2–3. Question 5 asked 'Is the Soviet system of government a fundamental principle of the Third International?' Question 8 asked 'In what respect does the Third International consider that communism differs from other forms of socialism' Question 9 asked 'Is it a condition of the Third International to accept communism as defined in question 8'.
- 29 *Moscow's Reply to the ILP*, London, ILP, 1920, p. 6.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 32 *The Internationalist*, 19 June and 17 July 1920.
- 33 *The ILP and the Third International*, London, National Labour Press, 1920.
- 34 *Labour Leader*, 19 August 1920.
- 35 Francis Johnson, *The Independent Labour Party and the International (A Memorandum for Members)*, London, ILP, 1920, pp. 3–4.
- 36 *Bradford Pioneer*, 6 August 1920.
- 37 *The Socialist*, 9 December 1920; *Labour Leader*, 23 December 1920. *The Socialist* was the organ of the Socialist Labour Party.
- 38 *Labour Leader*, 13 and 27 January 1921; *Leeds Citizen*, 21 January 1921.
- 39 ILP NAC 1921, ILP 3/13, Minutes 21 April 1921.
- 40 *Labour Leader*, 31 March 1921.
- 41 *The ILP Annual Conference Report 1921*, p. 115.
- 42 *Labour Leader*, 21 September 1921; Walter Kendall, *Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900–1921: The Origins of British Communism*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, p. 276.
- 43 *Resolutions and Nominations to be submitted to the 19th Annual Conference of the ILP, Southport, 27th, 28th and 29th March 1921*, London, ILP, 1921, p. 31.
- 44 *Labour Leader*, 21 September 1921.
- 45 *Leeds Citizen*, 29 July 1921.
- 46 *ILP Annual Conference Report, 1921*, p. 36, Appendix 1 'Report of the Delegation to the Vienna Conference', February 22–27, 1921.
- 47 NAC, Report to Head Office on 7 April 1921 on the delegation to Amsterdam where the French, German and British delegations met and discussed the Vienna Report.
- 48 NAC, Minutes, 15 July 1921 and 12–13 January 1922.
- 49 NAC Minutes, 22–23 September and 24 October 1921.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 16 February 1922.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 12 May 1922.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 17–21 October 1921, with a letter of reply from Arthur Henderson on 21 October 1921.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 25–26 June 1922. The NAC of 15 June 1921 had previously discussed the pros and cons of the Third International and Vienna Union discussions.
- 54 *Labour Leader*, 1 December 1921.
- 55 NAC Minutes, 23 March 1922.
- 56 Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p. 262.
- 57 *Socialism and Society* (1905), *Labour and Empire* (1907), *Socialism and Government* (2 volumes in 1909), *Syndicalism: A Critical Examination* (1912), and *The Social Unrest: Its Cause* (1913).

68 *The ILP and its new role, 1918–1922*

- 58 J. Ramsay MacDonald, MP, *The Socialist Movement*, London, Williams and Norgate, 1911, p. 150.
- 59 Austen Morgan, *J. Ramsay MacDonald*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p. 85.
- 60 R. E. Dowse, 'A Note on Ramsay MacDonald and Direct Action', *Political Studies*, 9.3 (October 1961), 306–8.
- 61 J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Parliament and Revolution*, Manchester, National Labour Press, 1919, pp. 50–4.
- 62 Fenner Brockway, *Bermondsey Story: The Life of Alfred Salter*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1949.
- 63 MacDonald, *Parliament and Revolution*, pp. 66, 102–3.
- 64 *Labour Leader*, 10 March 1921.
- 65 Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow*, p. 63.
- 66 A resolution of the No. 9 Divisional Conference to be held . . . on 20 January 1917, Stockport, p. 1 stated that 'the principle of Guild Socialism is essential to a democratic state'.
- 67 George Douglas Howard Cole, *Workers' Control in Industry*, London, ILP pamphlet, New Series No. 24, 1919.
- 68 *Labour Leader*, 23 December 1920.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 7 April 1921.
- 70 Bullock, *Under Siege*, pp. 67–70.
- 71 *Labour Leader*, 29 September 1921.
- 72 Marwick, *Clifford Allen*.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 23 February 1922.
- 74 *Labour Leader*, 8 December 1921.
- 75 *Bradford Pioneer*, 31 December 1921.
- 76 *Labour Leader*, 20 April 1922.
- 77 *Bradford Pioneer*, 21 April 1922.
- 78 *Ibid.*
- 79 Frank Matthews, 'The Ladder of Becoming: R. Orage, A. J. Penty and the Origins of Guild Socialism in England', in David Martin and David Rubinstein (eds), *Ideology and Labour Movement*, Brighton, Croom Helm, 1979; George Douglas Howard Cole, *Guild Socialism Re-stated*, London, Leonard Parsons, 1920.
- 80 *Bradford Pioneer*, 21 April 1922.
- 81 *Labour Leader*, 20 July 1922.
- 82 James Maxton (Chairman of the ILP), *Twenty Points for Socialism*, London, ILP, 1925.
- 83 *Socialist Review*, March 1923 and May 1923.
- 84 NAC Minutes, 11 January 1918.
- 85 *Ibid.*
- 86 NAC Minutes, ILP Memorandum Circulated 29 August 1919, containing the August 1919 Report on the Present Methods of Organisation.
- 87 In December 1910, Philip Snowden (for Blackburn), George Lansbury (Bow and Bromley), Fred Jowett (Bradford West), James Parker (Halifax), J. R. Clynes (Manchester North-East), Ramsay MacDonald (Leicester), Keir Hardie (Merthyr Tydfil) and Thomas Richardson (Whitehaven) had been returned as MPs, with W. C. Anderson joining after a by-election in 1914 (for Sheffield Attercliffe to which he was also returned in a by-election in 1918). Clynes was technically returned by the Labour Party and, perhaps, should be excluded. In 1918 only William Graham (for Edinburgh Central) and Neil Maclean (for Glasgow Govan) were returned. Sometimes, J. R. Clynes is listed as having been returned for Labour in Manchester North-East.
- 88 NAC Minutes, Report of the Organizing Department, April–September 1919.
- 89 *Ibid.*
- 90 Alan McKinlay, "'Doubtful Wisdom and Uncertain Promise": Strategy, Ideology and Organisation, 1918–1922', in McKinlay and Morris (eds), *The ILP on Clydeside*

1893–1932, pp. 137–8. By 1920 Govan, in Glasgow, had 306 members and 20 per cent of the ILP members in Glasgow were women.

91 NAC Minutes, 16 February and 23 March 1922.

92 Ibid., 8 August 1922.

93 Ibid., 12–13 January 1922.

94 Ibid., 12 May 1922.

95 Ibid., 14–15 April 1922.

3 Clifford Allen, the ‘Red Clydesiders’ and ‘Socialism in Our Time’, 1922–1928

In 1922, as a result of personal attacks upon his wife from within the ILP, Philip Snowden left the ILP NAC, creating a vacancy for the role of Treasurer at the Annual ILP Conference of April 1922. That vacancy was narrowly won by Clifford Allen, who was subsequently elected as Chairman of the Party at the Easter Conference of the ILP in April 1923, acting in that role until his resignation, on grounds of ill health in September/October 1925. The rise of Allen occurred at the moment that the ILP had gained a clearer identity through the introduction of the 1922 Constitution, and also through its considerable electoral success in the general election of October 1922. As a result of these developments, the ILP was re-invigorated, though increasingly divided, between its middle-class and working-class reformist group, supporting Allen and the more working-class ‘revolutionary’ group, ironically led by James Maxton, a school teacher from Glasgow, and John Wheatley, the publisher, from Glasgow and the Clydeside. The tensions between these two groups were exacerbated by the success of the Labour Party in forming the first, albeit minority, Labour government in 1924, mainly because the Allen faction tended to support MacDonald and his government, whereas the Clydesiders, whose votes had secured MacDonald’s victory for the leadership of the Labour Party in 1922, were critical of the failure of the minority government to press forward with a socialist programme. The years between 1922 and 1925, often referred to as the Allen years or era, were thus to prove a bitter battleground for the different sections of the ILP that were emerging, even though it was undoubtedly the ILP’s most successful period during the inter-war years. Indeed, Brockway recalled that ‘The ILP was very responsible in those days’.¹ And, Dowse argues that when Allen resigned in 1925 the ‘golden flood subsided’ along with his ‘leadership of genius’.² Indeed, both the Clydesiders and the ILP struggled with the development of ‘Socialism in Our Time’ from 1926, a policy designed to achieve exactly the message it conveyed.

The Allen years

The election of Allen as Treasurer made him, Brockway suggested, ‘in effect the directing head of the Party’ until his resignation as chairman in 1925.³ Dowse added that Allen was ‘The architect of the party’s success in the period’.⁴ As

Treasurer, he began to call upon his wealthy friends to become benefactors of the party, a call that continued even after George Benson succeeded him as Treasurer in 1923. Allen canvassed for money from his Quaker and NCF friends of the Great War and raised substantial donations.⁵ There was, indeed, a real need for money to push forward the ILP, particularly as it was faced with heavy economic burdens arising from the need to expand the membership of the party, through propaganda campaigns, the distribution of newspapers and sale of ILP pamphlets. The ILP had been in a perilous financial position when Allen took over as Treasurer, for the number of branches had fallen from 768 to 614 between 1921 and 1922, the reserve fund was down from £2,892 to £708, and the fees and quota contributions of branches were falling.⁶

The problem for the ILP was that whilst the number of branches was high, many branches, and therefore many members, did not pay fees to the National ILP. In the Great War it was unusual for more than half of branches to pay fees to the ILP Headquarters, or to the various financial schemes such as the compulsory quota, and the situation did not improve much during the 'Allen years'. Indeed, in 1924–1925 only about 34,000 members, out of the claimed 56,000 who were 'good on the books', paid affiliation fees.⁷ In Wales, in 1924 only 46 per cent of branches paid fees and only 31 per cent in 1925 – an average of 25 out of 81 branches at that time.⁸ The branch quotas were equally poorly provided, and it is clear that it was only the private donations raised by Allen's appeals to his wealthy friends that put the ILP in a healthy position. In 1922, the fees and levied branch quotas raised only £2,026, and only £1,181 in donations. In 1923 these figures were, respectively, £3,062 and £10,585, boosted by donations from Allen's friends. In 1925 these sums had risen to £5,517 and £10,639, respectively. Once Allen resigned as Chairman, the figures fell to £4,880 and £3,368, respectively, for the year 1925 to 1926.⁹ Whilst striking out for financial independence in 1925, the ILP Conference admitted that it was 'the generosity of friends' that ensured that the ILP had been able to expand for the previous three years. The Chairman, Financial Secretary, and Treasurer noted, in August 1924, that these outside contributions had prevented a deficit of £4,700 by the end of the year, along with asking the ILP MPs to contribute £100 to inaugurate a Special Effort Fund, and administrative measures to reduce printing and office costs.¹⁰ This financial revival of the movement allowed improvements in the organisational and propaganda initiatives.

Vital, and central, to this revival of the ILP in the 'Allen period', though a major drain on ILP finances, was the *Labour Leader*, which became the *New Leader* in early 1923. It was in a financially parlous position, with circulation down to less than 20,000 by the end of 1921, and was losing about £1,200 a year.¹¹ Despite this precarious situation, it was a vital organ which sustained the traditional values and networks of the ILP, and was dominated by the democratic parliamentary and municipal policies of the past whilst embracing the guild socialism of the 1922 Constitution. Indeed, faced with the prospect of a communist future for the ILP, in 1920 and 1921, both Katharine Bruce Glasier and Philip Snowden had resigned from their editorial responsibilities with the paper.

This led to a succession of editors from April 1921, with Tom Johnson editing it, as well as the Glasgow *Forward*, for a few weeks, until Clement James Bundock took over, only to be succeeded by Bertram R. Carter in July 1921.¹² The paper was also moved from Manchester to London. Under Carter's brief editorship in 1921, the ILP expressed the desire to maintain the established democratic views of ILP. Eventually, in 1922, H. N. Brailsford was appointed editor (at £1,000 per year compared with £3 15s 0d per week pittance paid to Glasier) with M. A. Hamilton as sub-editor.¹³ Under Brailsford's editorship, the *Labour Leader* trumpeted 'The Great ILP Campaign of November and December 1922', initiated by John Beckett and supported by Brockway, which sought to prevent the ILP from simply being dominated by wealthy men and old trade union officials. Yet, aware that this campaign might seem to be a criticism of the rapidly emerging Labour Party, Brockway maintained that it was not introduced in a 'spirit of opposition to the Labour Party'.¹⁴ The whole purpose was to reassert the ILP's position within the social democratic policies of Britain, and the *Labour Leader* was the driving point for many initiatives designed to increase membership 'in a big forward movement' which was to consist of 365 conferences and another 200 meetings.¹⁵ These campaigns were successful in increasing membership, and a consequence was that by mid-November 1922, the *Labour Leader's* circulation had dramatically risen to 51,292. It mounted a 'Now for Socialism' campaign, and by Easter 1923 and by the time when there was a short break in the campaign at the end of the year, 52 conferences and 542 demonstrations had been held.¹⁶ Yet the *Labour Leader/New Leader* remained a financial burden on the ILP, despite its improved circulation, which tended to fluctuate between 49,000 and 53,000 in 1924, and £1,000 was set aside for it to help it operate through 1925.¹⁷ Yet the ILP's successful propaganda meant that, through the Labour Press Ltd, it was able to increase ILP readership and publish a number of pamphlets on the post-1922 Constitution, including ones on 'The ILP and Public Ownership' and 'The Policy of the ILP'.¹⁸ Social democracy was thus being thrust forward and sustained by the ILP. For the more ardent ILP members there was also the *Socialist Review*, edited by Ramsay MacDonald, whose circulation increased from 3,000 to 3,750 throughout 1924.¹⁹

ILP propagandists and speakers, from 1922 onwards, were also greatly aided by the ILP Information Committee, which produced a weekly information sheet, entitled 'Weekly Notes for Speakers', of up-to-date facts and advice. These Notes were considered of immense importance and value by members, speakers and MPs, such as John Wheatley MP and Dr. Alfred Salter, 'who considered them valuable'.²⁰ They were distributed to ILP branches, co-operative societies and trade unions and, in order to capitalise on the last of these, the NAC formed an Industrial Committee with a budget of £200 to help the nine divisions to form their own Industrial Committees, through which a 'Now for Socialism' campaign was intended to operate and was directed at the working man and the trade unionist.²¹ Branches were encouraged to form evening classes, which would be supplied by socialist study material, and 200 branches were holding weekly study circles by June 1925.²²

The rapid transformation in the fortunes of the ILP was further transmitted into its greatly improved parliamentary successes. The end of the David Lloyd George Coalition Government brought about a general election in October 1922, which saw Allen focus ILP efforts upon raising up to £22,000 through the Special Effort Fund, for parliamentary activity, although the total had in fact only reached £8,777 by the end of the year.²³ Nevertheless, with this money, growing membership and strong regional growth, the ILP had increased the number of its sponsored MPs from 5 to 34 MPs in the general election of 1922.²⁴ Although this improvement was seen widely across Britain, the big breakthrough occurred in Glasgow and along the Clydeside. Eight of the ten Glasgow seats contested by the ILP were won, and, in addition, Edward Rosslyn Mitchell polled well in Glasgow Central, receiving 41.9 per cent of the votes even though, unsurprisingly, he lost out to Andrew Bonar Law, the Conservative and Unionist Prime Minister. The 1922 general election was, indeed, a spectacular breakthrough which saw, amongst other things, the return of James Maxton, for Glasgow Bridgeton, and John Wheatley, for Glasgow Shettleston, who were emerging as two of the major political figures of the ILP during the inter-war years. Apart from the eight victories in Glasgow, there were also seven other Scottish ILP successes, some of them from the Clydeside region. Manny Shinwell, who was to become a force in the ILP and a legendary figure within the Labour Party, was returned for Linlithgowshire, and William Graham successfully defended his seat of Edinburgh Central. R. K. Middlemass suggests that the 1922 general election was the coping stone of ILP socialism, projecting both the ILP and the Clydesiders forward as never before and thus ensuring that there would be a conflict between the internationalist and nationalist sections of the ILP. This dramatic parliamentary breakthrough was to become even more emphatic in the general election of December 1923, which was to re-balance and re-shape the national ILP, with Maxton, Shinwell, Wheatley and other Scottish representatives playing an increasingly important role in the national Party as the 1920s progressed. The 1922 parliamentary successes pushed the ILP to press forward with its 1922 Constitution, and to demanding 'Workers' Control of Industry', 'Total Disarmament' and its social policies'.²⁵

The ILP's structure and organisation were clearly progressing under Allen's tutelage. New branches were opening. There had been 775 branches at the end of the First World War, but this number had then fallen to fewer than 650 by 1921, after which the figure had increased to 717 at the end of 1923, to 956 by December 1924 and 1,028 by 1925.²⁶ MacDonald, still a member of the ILP and MP for Aberavon from 1922 to 1929, was leading the PLP, Snowden had been returned for the Colne Valley constituency as an ILPer in 1922, and Jowett for Bradford East. Many other established figures now also held parliamentary seats. In common with the national situation there had been significant expansion in Scotland, and particularly in Glasgow, where the branches had recovered from the Great War.²⁷ The West Yorkshire branches had also recovered. Indeed, at the outset of War, the Bradford ILP had 1,600 members but this had fallen to 1,400 members by 1918. From then on membership had increased, particularly in the early months of 1923, before reaching its apogee of 2,377 members in early 1927.²⁸ The

existing Yorkshire branches expanded their membership, and new branches were formed. Fred Jowett and Willie Leach of Bradford, Mrs. Pinchbeck of Leeds, A. V. Williams of the Woodhouse ILP branch of Leeds, Ben Riley of Dewsbury and R. Brown of Shipley addressed numerous conferences and gave innumerable lectures. Indeed, there was considerable activity throughout Yorkshire in January 1923 when the local ILP mounted its 'National Winter Campaign for Socialism'. The membership of even the smallest ILP branches continued to rise: the Cross-gates ILP, Leeds, reported a rise from 72 members to 79 at its annual meeting in February 1926.²⁹ The *Bradford Pioneer* reflected that

The ILP was, a little while ago, lacking intellectual life. As soon as the justice of the suggestion [the creation of an Arts Guild] was realized it began to be repaid. The ILP started an Arts Guild and made a success of it. . . . A study class has been decided upon.³⁰

Eventually, a building in Bradford, which became Jowett Hall, was rented (and eventually purchased in 1927), and was the venue for drama productions and lectures until the early 1930s.

Such growth, typical of many ILP divisional areas, was stimulated by a variety of initiatives by the NAC. It awarded grants to pay for campaigns and lecturers throughout the country, paying half the cost of a membership and propaganda campaign in Shropshire being conducted by the Welsh Divisional Council in 1923.³¹ It provided £150 towards a Scottish Highlands campaign in 1924, £250 for an organiser in the South-West, and further grants towards organising 150 meetings in 1925.³² There was a new crusading vibrancy within the movement, greatly engendered by the new money which had flowed into the Party.

The ILP particularly reached out to the young through the Guild of Youth. Frank Rouse was asked to act as the Honorary Secretary of the Youth Section in February 1924, and the Provisional Committee of the Guild of Youth was formed at the Annual ILP Easter Conference at York of the same year.³³ It grew quickly. P.J. Dollan and the Scottish Federation³⁴ called a Guild Conference on 3 January 1925, where arrangements were to be made to organise Scottish Guilds.³⁵ By January 1925, about 100 Guilds had been formed, and 41 were in the process of formation. There was discussion about the Guild of Youth being regarded as the Youth Section of the ILP, that all branches should be attached to the ILP. It was agreed that its National Council would be organised so that two-thirds of its committee were Guild members and a third were members of the NAC; the age of membership would be 14 to 25; members would be eligible to become full members of the ILP at the age of 21; and the Guilds would have local autonomy over their own activities. A membership fee of 1d [0.4p] was to be paid to the National Committee. By May 1925, the National Committee of the Guild of Youth had two ordinary members of the NAC on it and, apart from them, the Committee was allowed to send one member to attend the NAC in an advisory capacity.³⁶ George Darling became the first representative of the Guild of Youth on the NAC, and he and Doris Sharp reported regularly to the NAC on

the expanding work of the Guild.³⁷ By December 1925, there were 171 Guild branches in existence. In the first instance the Guild organised football leagues, swimming, hiking, discussion groups and numerous other social activities. The local Guilds brought a vibrancy to the ILP. Guilds in the Lancashire Division published their own newspaper, *The Flame*, which seems to have gained wide circulation, and May Sandham was collecting funds for the movement from her Chorley home.³⁸ Guilds were formed, collapsed and reformed with regularity in the 1920s, but Guilds did form an important part of branch life of perhaps about a quarter to a fifth of ILP branches in the 1920s, and their members often represented the more committed and revolutionary members of the party, proudly announcing their presence by wearing bright red shirts at annual conferences.³⁹ Yet local Guilds of Youth, whilst generating interest in the ILP, also created problems with local ILP branches, some of whom were not always happy to see attempts 'to form a Junior Section within their branch'.⁴⁰ In the 1930s, the Guild of Youth and its local organisations were to prove troublesome, as will become evident later; the movement became increasingly dominated by communist activists at a time when they claimed to be both affiliated to the ILP and independent organisations.

The ILP also became much more involved in women's politics. Women had always been active members within the ILP, but it was the Labour Party which incorporated women's sections into the existing branch structure, as the Women's Labour League, and its organiser Dr. Marion Phillips moved into the Labour Party.⁴¹ The ILP had prominent women members, such as Katherine Bruce Glasier and Dorothy Jewson, of Norwich, though its women members were also often connected with the women's section of the Labour Party. Only gradually, and in the years of Allen's period of dominance, did ILP women begin to form their own organisation. An ILP's women's delegation to the Women's Joint Standing Committee was approved for Mrs. Lowe and Mrs. Glasier in December 1924.⁴² From this point onwards, branches began to form their own women's groups. Indeed, 48 women's branches participated in the ILP's Women's Day of 22 February 1925, even though P. J. Dollan and the Scottish Division had wanted the event postponed until June 1925.⁴³ The NAC of the ILP sent at least 18 women delegates to the National Conference of Labour women's delegates, and these included Mrs. Wallhead, Mrs. Bruce Glasier, Mrs. Neil Maclean, and Mrs. Dollan, the wives of leading ILP figures, and Dorothy Jewson and Dr. Violet Jewson to the National Conference of Labour Women.⁴⁴ Shortly afterwards, it was reported that 94 women's groups had been formed by branches and that the *New Leader* had, belatedly, decided to provide a women's page.⁴⁵

Growing more confident of its own future, the ILP also began to develop further its summer school activities, where leading figures of the Party and activists began to discuss the latest policies of the day connected with social change, the economy and international politics. The 1925 event was held at Easton Lodge, which was the lodge house of Lady Warwick's estate and was the venue for Oswald Mosley, at that time a prominent member of the ILP. There was discussion of his economic ideas to tackle poverty and unemployment in Britain by providing money, through

banks, to the working classes at low interest rates to create demand, ideas which became the basis of his book, *Revolution by Reason* (1925).⁴⁶

Such confidence and growth within the ILP belied the fact that there were deep divisions. Whilst Allen and his supporters were concerned with the economic and social theories of organising society, and with the international issues of the governance of India and the fate of the French occupation of the German Ruhr, it is clear that the Glasgow and Clydeside MPs were unhappy with the emphasis of both the Labour Party and the ILP on foreign, rather than home affairs, parliamentary conventions and the slowness of parliamentary change. James Maxton and John Wheatley were more intent upon dealing with the immediate problems of poverty and unemployment in Britain that were most evident in Glasgow and Clydeside. They were men in a hurry, and their baptism into parliamentary politics was far from reassuring, and one that was exacerbated only by the Labour leadership of MacDonald, whose real concern was foreign policy. Famously, David Kirkwood had written in March 1923 that

I sincerely regret that many members of the Labour Party should be eternally giving prominence to the Ruhr, Montenegro or Timbuctoo, when their prime duty is to emancipate the British working class. I know that all this interest in foreign affairs is a heritage from Liberalism.⁴⁷

Yet, from the outset of the Allen years there were clear signs of tensions at the new regime. There was some disquiet at the high salary (though it was half his previous journalistic income) earned by H. N. Brailsford, who was editor (1922–1926) of the *Labour Leader/New Leader*, and from the fact that in 1924 Brockway also became general secretary at £500 per year (although this was about half of his previous income).⁴⁸ These salaries saddled a major financial burden upon the resurgent ILP and seemed obscenely high to the Clydesiders. In addition, G. D. H. Cole, the academic socialist writer, was unhappy that the guild socialism he so favoured was not being pushed forward enough by the ILP, although this may itself have been partly because of the collapse of the NGL in 1923 and the failure of the *Guild Socialist* in August 1923, even though it was replaced by *New Standards, A Journal of Workers' Control*, a year later.⁴⁹

Tensions rose in 1924 as Allen fought for the NAC to exert greater control over the issue of divisional funds but faced strong opposition from a movement which was steeped in a commitment to regional autonomy.⁵⁰ His initiative on this issue was defeated at the Annual Conference in 1925.⁵¹ Also, as Brockway observed, there was much resentment directed at Allen for presenting the ILP as the socialist conscience of the Labour Party and giving it the appearance of being a new type of Fabian Society. They disliked the impression of superiority he conveyed.⁵² Nevertheless, the major problems Allen faced were connected with the first Labour government and the failure of the Labour Party to promote socialism whilst it was in office in 1924 and the attitude of MacDonald, the Prime Minister, whose rising importance coincided with his retreat from ILP politics.

James Ramsay MacDonald, the Labour Party, and the first Labour government of 1924

MacDonald's political career is very well documented, from his early days in Scotland, through the Liberal Party and the Fabians, into the ILP and the Labour Party.⁵³ As already seen, the Great War led to his resignation from the effective leadership of the Labour Party and a higher commitment to the ILP's anti-war, if not pacifist, politics. He lost his seat (held from 1906 to 1918) at Leicester East in the 'Khaki' general election of 1918 and spent the next four years working within the ILP and the Labour Party on policy and organisation, remaining a member of the ILP until 1930. Importantly, MacDonald became Labour Party leader in 1922 largely because of the influence of the ILP and particularly the Clydesiders, who claimed that 'We were MacDonald's men'.⁵⁴ The ILP MPs, returned in 1922, had met to decide their choice of leader. Maxton suggested Wheatley for the post of PLP chairman but found that Wheatley was rejected by Shinwell, who proposed MacDonald, seconded by another prominent Scottish ILP MP, L. MacNeill Weir. This proposal was 'opposed by Maxton with all the vehemence at his command' and with 'cold fury' by Snowden, who believed MacDonald to be a temporiser who had been 'wooing the Scottish Left in the columns of the *Forward*'.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, MacDonald was nominated and supported at a subsequent meeting of 142 members of the PLP, where he was elected by 61 votes against the 56 given to J. R. Clynes, who had been a pre-war member of the ILP and the organiser of the Gasworkers' Union in Lancashire. Only Maxton of the Clydeside MPs voted against MacDonald, and David Kirkwood, famously, reflected that Arthur Henderson told him, prophetically, that 'You Clyde men are determined to put MacDonald in. Well, if you do so, it will only be a few years before you will be trying to put him out'.⁵⁶ It was not long before this prophesy came true, for whilst MacDonald, as Labour leader, and then first Labour prime minister in 1924, attempted to temper the hopes of his Labour supporters and urged caution, moderation and a commitment to observing parliamentary procedure, it is clear that the ILP MPs, especially those from the Clydeside were more inclined to a rebel-rousing and disruptive approach to the parliamentary politics, as Jon Lawrence and Richard Toye have recently observed.⁵⁷

The Glasgow ILP and Labour MPs returned to Parliament in November 1922 and were waved off from St. Enoch's station by about a quarter of a million people, who were men on a mission to raise concerns about poverty, poor housing and unemployment. Subsequently, armed with a resolution passed at the 1922 ILP Conference, recommending that Labour MPs should not accept the hospitality of the political opponents at public dinners and society functions, it was clear that the ILP, and particularly the Clydesiders, were going to challenge the rules and orders of the parliamentary system.⁵⁸ They were, famously, prepared to challenge MacDonald's emphasis upon moderation and operating by parliamentary procedure in a debate about the Scottish Health Board Estimates in June 1923. Maxton, who campaigned with the slogan 'Vote Maxton and Save the Children', opposed the cuts to health grants and the proposals for economies in school meals and clothing

being put before the House of Commons. Maxton suggested that these measures were no less than the 'murder' of children. He called Sir Frederick Banbury (a Conservative MP), who objected to his accusation 'as the worst murderer of all'.⁵⁹ Maxton then refused the Speakers' order that he withdraw his remark. He sat down to be replaced by John Wheatley, Campbell Stephen (Glasgow Camlachie) and then George Buchanan (MP for Glasgow Gorbals). All four were then suspended and asked to withdraw from the House for their failure to use 'parliamentary language'. MacDonald, and most Labour MPs, voted for their suspension from the House of Commons in the desire to observe parliamentary language and procedure, seeing Maxton's action as a publicity stunt.⁶⁰ The 'murderers' incident revealed that whilst MacDonald was conscious of the need to preserve parliamentary etiquette, Maxton and the Clydesiders were much more intent on revealing the realities of working-class life to a complacent Parliament. The Scottish ILP supported their action, and Tom Johnston, a parliamentary teller at the time, described all those who voted for the government measure as murderers.⁶¹ This event united the Glasgow ILP and other Labour groups in their attack on poverty and put it at odds with MacDonald, who was anxious to urge moderation, placing Allen in a difficult position in his attempt to ensure that the ILP and Labour Party, through MacDonald, worked closely together.

The ILP published *The Socialist Programme: The Constructive Proposal of the Independent Labour Party*, written by Allen, Brockway and Ernest E. Hunter, as its socialist programme for the general election of December 1923, which saw the return of 46 ILP MPs. A comprehensive document of 53 pages, it stands as a timely reminder of ILP policy on every major issue, though often vague on precise details, and published with a warning that 'We do not, of course, suggest that these programmes could be carried through the course of a single session in Parliament'.⁶² Noting that there was economic misery and poverty everywhere as a result of capitalistic exploitation, it suggested that socialism aimed to deal with human need, not private profit, and that it would nationalise industry in order to introduce science to production to meet human needs and to act as an 'outlet for man's craftsmanship and energy (p. 24), build more houses, raise the school age ultimately to 18, increase the free places at secondary school from 25 per cent to 40 per cent, nationalise the banks and land, and create boards, such as a National Wages Board and County Committee, to rent out land to tenant farmers. One of its most controversial policies, and one taken up by Snowden and the Labour Party, was the introduction of a graduated Capital Levy of 5 per cent on wealth of over £6,000 and 35 per cent on wealth of £50,000.⁶³ Reaching back to its early ILP roots, the *Socialist Programme* also aimed to strengthen local government, the localities and industry and encourage municipal authorities to make full use of their existing powers: 'The Independent Labour Party believes that a healthy democratic state must be founded upon active civic life'.⁶⁴ On the issue of Europe it claimed that 'Socialism would bring prosperity, freedom and peace', and that the economic reconstruction of Europe could be achieved by the removal of reparation claims, the cancellation of Allied debts and the establishment of mutual agreements.⁶⁵ The proposals reflected the long-term commitment of the ILP to

peace, parliamentary change and the public ownership of the means of production. However, it was not at all clear what form of public control would emerge. In some parts of the proposals it would appear that there would be nationalisation, whilst in others there was a suggestion of municipal control and, to confuse matters further, there was the suggestion that 'Public control would mean public ownership and workers control in its widest sense'.⁶⁶ This was a reference to the guild socialist ideas adopted by the ILP in 1922. However, what this programme failed to perceive is that nationalisation, municipalisation and workers' control were all different forms of control, that a commitment to a parliamentary system that undermined any notion of the permanence of socialism, and that there was always the potential of conflict between groups of workers and their trade unions, on the one hand, and the state on the other, even within the interrelated Guild system. This dichotomy probably did not matter to the faithful amongst the ILP in Glasgow, London, Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, but was to become a major problem with the Labour Party, which could only progress slowly to socialism and along the route of nationalisation rather than the plurality of forms which the ILP seemed to be advocating. The conflict over 'Socialism in Our Time', which was to emerge later, was already being foreshadowed in the 1923 general election manifesto.

The dichotomy between gradualism and the rapid introduction of socialism became even more evident on 22 January 1924 when the first Labour government came to office under MacDonald in a situation where the Labour Party, the second largest party, supported by the Liberals, replaced Stanley Baldwin's Conservative government. MacDonald, ignoring his own advice of not taking office at the head of a minority government, assumed office at the head of a parliamentary party of 191 MPs, 120 of whom were also members of the ILP, although only 46 had actually been sponsored by the ILP.⁶⁷ Of these sponsored ILP MPs, 18 of them were returned for the increasingly important Scottish Division.⁶⁸ Just under a quarter of Labour MPs were thus sponsored by the ILP, three members of the NAC (Jowett, Wheatley and MacDonald) were members of the Cabinet, and three other members of the ILP (Snowden, Charles Trevelyan, and J. Wedgewood), were also in the Cabinet. Nine others, including Clem Attlee and Manny Shinwell, held junior ministerial posts.⁶⁹ This was a powerful ILP presence, which implied ILP acceptance of its responsibility for the actions of the first Labour government. Yet, although this gave the impression of unity within the Labour government and the Labour Party, MacDonald felt that he received little support from the ILP. Patrick Dollan attempted to dispel that notion in his report to the 1924 ILP Annual Easter Conference, in which he stated that 'The Premier, instead of being condemned, was awarded a vote of confidence. Even the "wild men" from Scotland were congratulatory of the efforts and intentions of the Government'.⁷⁰ Yet this was an attempt to play down the fact that the ILP did not like the strategy of the first Labour government, which was essentially to establish itself as reliable, responsible and prepared to play, rather than challenge, the parliamentary game.

At Labour's victory rally at Albert Hall on 8 January 1924, almost two weeks before the Labour Party took office, it was clear to H. W. Massingham, the

journalist and former editor of *Nation*, that MacDonald was trying to establish the legitimacy of the Labour Party rather than to bring about socialist changes for 'Mr. MacDonald had come to say a difficult word to an idealistic audience. The word was moderation. . . . The effort of the Labour ministry to establish itself as a governing force would be made clear'.⁷¹ The message seemed to be that Labour in office would simply focus upon bringing Russia and Germany back into the international fold and do little towards tackling unemployment, since that was a failure of capitalism. This approach was never going to meet the expectations of either the NAC of the ILP or the rank and file, who wished for strong and clear moves towards socialism, even from a minority Labour government. And, despite his close relationship with MacDonald, Allen's chairman's address at the 1924 ILP Annual Conference stressed the need for a 'persistent pressure in favour of an increasing bold use of power for Socialist measures and administration', as well as the need for the promotion of socialist knowledge to appeal to the nation.⁷² Thus, even Allen was advocating that the first Labour government should press forwards with socialist issues, be prepared to be defeated, and willing then to present its socialist programme to the electorate again.⁷³

The frustration and hostility from the ILP to such Labour-Party moderation was quick to emerge. W. H. Ayles (MP for Bristol North), a wartime ILP pacifist, attempted to reduce the army size by 150,000 in an amendment to the Defence Estimates in the Commons.⁷⁴ In the same debate, Willie Leach, Under Secretary of State for Air, Defended the Air Force vote in the Defence Estimates, even though he had also been a pacifist in the Great War. The ILP was beginning to divide even though it was far from imploding.

To the ILP, however, and particularly the Clydesiders, the crucial issue was unemployment, which it felt the Labour government was not addressing despite some relaxation in the rules for receiving unemployment benefits.⁷⁵ On 17 May 1924, NAC of the ILP organised a conference on unemployment for the summer of 1924 with the aim of bringing

to the notice of the government the immediate improvement that would accrue to the establishment of a 48-hour week as a maximum working week for all workers, and an all-round increase in wages to employed workers and allowances to unemployed workers.⁷⁶

On 6 June it organised a number of unemployment conferences to discuss these issues, to raise school-leaving age and to encourage the formation of a number of other policies. However, whilst Allen and the ILP pressed for more measures on unemployment, MacDonald simply continued to complain to Allen about the lack of support he was receiving from the ILP.⁷⁷ There were also demands that the Labour Government should take action to support self-government for India, and that some equal sharing arrangement between the British government and the Indian people might develop, but there was little or no prospect of that occurring under a minority Labour government.⁷⁸ The Labour government was not delivering what the ILP wanted. Indeed, the achievements of the first Labour government

of 1924 were modest and, essentially, came down to MacDonald's attempt to bring peace and understanding in Europe by tackling the issue of German reparations and reducing the number of capital ships of all European nations, and Wheatley's Housing Act of 1924, which provided substantial government subsidies to promote the municipal provision of rented accommodations.⁷⁹ Wheatley's work, as Minister of Health and Housing, was appreciated by his fellow ILPers, but the Birmingham City ILP branch was unhappy at the limited actions to remove the reparations issue as a potential issue that might combust a future and the reduction in armaments, which led it to demand more action to reduce the navy, army and air force 'as a practical stand towards disarmament'.⁸⁰

The foreign policy of the first Labour government met some of the demands of the ILP but proved to be the basis of conflict and further division with the ILP. Both the opening of trade relations with Russia and the attempt to bring Germany back into the political fold by providing it with a loan and getting the French to withdraw from the Ruhr were popular within the ILP, but the details of the Dawes Plan to lighten German reparations after the First World War proved divisive. The Dawes Plan emerged from a committee chaired by Charles G. Dawes and was designed to reduce the burden of reparations on Germany. It planned to raise the burden of German reparations from £50 million to £125 million over five years, although no payment would be made in the first year without a foreign loan of £40 million. Controversy surrounded the Dawes Plan because it implicitly condemned the French occupation of the Ruhr and skated over the danger of Germany defaulting on her post-war reparations under the Treaty of Versailles, declaring that sanctions would only be applied in the instance of 'flagrant failure' in payment. There was also the implicit point that reparations could be given up to ensure the economic stability and security of Europe. The Labour government accepted the scheme and placed pressure upon the French and the Germans to end their occupation of the Ruhr, vaguely offering some guarantee of security to the French security. The whole issue became more complicated because, initially, it appeared that only Britain would give up reparations, a view strongly supported by some sections of the ILP but not by the rest of the Labour Party. Both the *Leicester Pioneer* and the *Bradford Pioneer*, local organs of the ILP, favoured the unilateral renunciation reparations, but in the House of Commons, E. D. Morel opposed the idea of government money being offered as a loan to Germany as part of this arrangement, whilst MacDonald himself, with the support of Brailsford and the *New Leader*, felt that a total renunciation of reparations by Britain would weaken her position at the negotiating table, leaving Germany at the mercy of France and creating ongoing instability in Europe.⁸¹ The issue of unilateralism and multilateralism on this issue came to divide both the ILP and the Labour Party.

Once the Liberals decided to withdraw their support from the Labour government in October 1924 – in opposition to a widening of economic relations between Britain and Russia and the famous Campbell case, where the communist newspaper sub-editor J. R. Campbell was first arrested on a charge of inspiring communist sedition and then released – the Labour government was forced to call a general election. Almost inevitably, given its minority position, the Labour

government was defeated. In the 1924 general election, the ILP sponsored 87 candidates and returned only 32 MPs, a substantial reduction on the number returned in 1923, although this was not out of line with the Labour Party's overall performance. It would have been so even if there had not been the infamous, and almost certainly fake, Zinoviev Letter suggesting that the Third International was intending to infiltrate the Labour Party to help achieve communism in Britain, and was recognised as such by some of the ILP branches, such as the Birmingham City branch which felt that the 1925 Annual ILP Conference had been 'singularly disappointing' in treating the matter.⁸² At this moment, MacDonald, whilst revising his pamphlet, *The History of the ILP*, published the pamphlet as 'The Story of the ILP and What It Stands for', explaining how the Labour government had been formed and that

A Socialist resolution had been defeated by nearly three to one in the House; the country had given no mandate for constructive change; the task was a difficult one – that of doing national work so truly and well, at home and abroad, as to win national consent for Socialist efficiency. The experiment came to an end on October this year when the first Labour Government was defeated by a combination of Tories and Liberals.⁸³

The ILP, and particularly the Scottish, or Clydeside, ILP 'rebels', did not accept this explanation of the failure of the first Labour government. Stung by such failure resulting, as it felt, from the feeling that the gradualism of the Labour Party and its own acceptance of the first Labour government, the ILP began its process of disassociation from such gradualism. David Kirkwood wrote that 'The 1924 election was lost – partly because of the Zinovieff letter, which was a swindle, and partly because the Labour Government had accomplished nothing and challenged nothing'.⁸⁴ This was a view that seemed to find broad favour in the ILP which was temporarily united in such thought by the release, of some, from the necessary support of the moderate Labour government and the feeling that it should be much more committed to pressing forward with socialism. Indeed, the *New Leader* reflected that 'We have lost office. We have gained the right to be ourselves'.⁸⁵ Over the next few years the theme of disassociation with the Labour Party developed, as the NAC first tried to get its MPs in the House of Commons confined to those for whom it was financially responsible, an action which the PLP did not accept, as it tried to get its nine divisional councils to examine the credentials of its parliamentary nominees more carefully to establish whether or not they were keen to be an ILP MP.⁸⁶

Allen had already anticipated the ILP conundrum of a minority Labour government securing power for political purposes at the same time as its socialist supporters expected the introduction of socialist policies. In his pamphlet, *Putting Socialism into Perspective*, written six months into the life of the first Labour government, he had suggested that the real problem was that the electors had not accepted socialism, and that the real purpose of a minority Labour government, and the ILP, in that situation was to offer socialist policies, almost as an educational and propagandist act, to ensure that a future Labour government was in the

position to introduce socialism.⁸⁷ He elaborated further in his Presidential address to the 1925 ILP Conference six months after the defeat of the Labour government. Looking towards a future Labour government, he rejected the views of those who felt that a Labour government could only introduce socialism with 51 per cent of the vote by suggesting that 'Politics must cease to be the art of getting and retaining power, legislation should be designed not to keep the support of the electorate but to educate it in political opinion'.⁸⁸ The message was to take action and demonstrate the power of socialism, whether the Labour government was a minority or a majority one. Indeed,

If Socialism becomes only a political opinion and ceases to be a philosophy of life, it will not bring liberty into the art of government and simplicity into the lives of those who engage in politics, and if it fail, I see no other political creed which offers any hope to the world.⁸⁹

The defeat of the Labour government amplified the divisions within the ILP. At one level it brought into sharp focus the divisions between those MPs who merely sought the endorsement by the ILP and those who were actually financially endorsed by the ILP, receiving, for instance, a minimum of £40 to cover election expenses in the 1924 general election. Perhaps as a result of this difference in commitment to the ILP, opposition to MacDonald and the first Labour government was mixed, and the Yorkshire Division, as did other divisions and branches, routinely and ritually congratulated the Labour government on its successes at the ILP Annual Conference at Gloucester in 1925.⁹⁰ The motion was passed by 398 votes to 139, but there was considerable vocal opposition to it at the Annual Conference. And in the ILP Summer School at Easton Lodge Gatehouse in August 1925, Allen reflected that 'we were foolishly filled with hopes, and foolishly disappointed' with the first Labour government, feeling that it should have attempted to challenge the system and attempted to introduce socialism. Such criticism of MacDonald's approach of establishing that the ILP and Labour Party parliamentary and political legitimacy was controversial and ensured that there would be no committee of the ILP and the Labour Party on the projection of socialism to the public.⁹¹ Yet, there was considerable support for the ILP to take the lead in pushing for socialism. *Labour's Northern Voice*, for instance, was studied with articles demanding that the ILP inaugurate change from its first issue in 1925, and indeed throughout the next few years by Jenkin, as well as other writers, who felt that 'Our whole democratic machinery needs overhauling', and that there was a need 'for a break with the existing form of society'.⁹² Allen and the ILP were already coming up with their own solution to ensuring the implementation of socialist policies through 'The Living Wage' and 'Socialism in Our Time' campaigns.

The living wage, the Labour Party, and Socialism in Our Time

The idea of establishing a 'Living Wage' was not new. In part, it arose from the pre-war demands of local ILP branches for 6d per hour and a 48-hour week, a

regular feature of ILP municipal manifestoes in Bradford and the textile district of the West Riding.⁹³ More specifically, the issue was raised in the House of Commons by Will Crooks in 1911 and subsequently published as a pamphlet, *A Living Wage for all*.⁹⁴ Building upon pre-war feelings and sentiments, in 1923 the Bermondsey ILP also produced a pamphlet on *The Living Wage for All*, based upon the 7 March 1923 House of Commons speech of its ILP MP, Dr. Alfred Salter, who also wrote an article in the *New Leader*, entitled 'The Cry for a Living Wage', which argued that a living wage was necessary and would not kill off industry.⁹⁵ Indeed, there was a sense in which this was becoming a commonplace, if not a ubiquitous demand from ILP branches.

The idea also owed something to the writings of Liberal economists, concerned at underconsumption repressing wages. The underconsumption theories of J. A. Hobson, the one-time Liberal progressive who joined the ILP in 1919, outlined in his book, *The Industrial System* (1909), were clearly influential in suggesting that measures to stimulate income would increase consumption and economic growth, creating more employment and increased income. This was seen as being denied by the domination of capitalism, which placed an increasing proportion of income and wealth in the hands of the business community. It is therefore not surprising that David Howell commented of *The Living Wage* that it 'epitomized the blend of progressive liberalism and ILP ethical socialism that characterized Allen's hope for the left'.⁹⁶ Yet it became consumed in the wider campaign for 'Socialism in Our Time', which meant that it attracted all types of objectives to its primary aim. John Paton, who became General Secretary of the ILP between 1927 and 1933, reflected upon these 'accretions' in his autobiography, *Left Turn*,⁹⁷ in which he projected the view that little was stable or recognizable as a programme 'but expressed really 'an ever-fiercer impatience and an extreme militancy of spirit'. *The Living Wage* was buried under the wider campaign for socialism, though at the heart of it was the implicit suggestion that the wage-based capitalist economy could be made to work by raising living standards, creating more demand and increasing employment.

Allen began the serious ILP discussion of the potential of the 'Living Wage' as an anathema to the slow move to socialism as early as December 1923, on the eve of the formation of the first Labour government.⁹⁸ He developed this further at the ILP Annual Conference of Easter 1924, where he urged the Labour government to set up inquiries into British industries and the necessity of setting up 'a Living Wage' as a national policy.⁹⁹ At the Annual Easter Conference of the ILP in 1925, he was to express his regret that the Labour government had not taken his advice.¹⁰⁰ In between the two ILP Annual Conferences, at the Scarborough Summer School of 1924, Allen further demanded a national charter of individual welfare, incorporating minimum standards in health, housing and wages. This eventually led to the NAC forming a number of committees to discuss future ILP policies, including one to discuss the introduction of a living wage. That Commission was formed just after the Annual ILP Conference, held at York in April 1924, and included J. A. Hobson, as Chairman, H. N. Brailsford, Arthur Creech Jones, E. F. Wise and Clifford Allen.

This Commission was, thus, composed of a body of professional men. The political and journalistic pedigree of both Allen and Brailsford has been well trailed. As for Wise, he had been a Cambridge-educated civil servant before entering ILP politics, became a committed co-operator who had been involved in re-establishing trade with Russia, and was to become ILP MP for Leicester East between 1929 and 1931. Arthur Creech Jones was also a civil servant and Labour MP, a CO in the Great War. Hobson was a famous socialist economist. Their initial ideas of establishing a minimum basic wage and a children's allowance were reported in the *New Leader* by August 1924, and by the turn of 1925, Brailsford and the *New Leader* were strongly campaigning for wages to be brought 'into closer relations with human need'.¹⁰¹ It was argued that such a living wage would stimulate home demand, something which Ernest Bevin, the important trade union leader, was also stressing at this time, and Hobson felt industry would be forced to re-organise itself to meet the increasing demand that would arise from the 'living wage'.¹⁰² It was the Annual ILP Conference, held at Gloucester in 1925, that was responsible for *The Living Wage* document that was eventually published in September 1926 – though by that time Allen's ideas were being fitted into a potentially more 'revolutionary' framework by Maxton and the Clydesiders.

Allen's initiative should, however, be seen as part of a far more wide-ranging set of discussions that were proceeding at this time. The Scarborough Summer School of 1924 had, after all, been addressed by the Liverpool Liberal progressive Eleanor Rathbone, on her pet subject of 'Family Endowments', based upon her recently published work, *The Disinherited Family* (1924). She demanded the introduction of the ideas of a family allowance, a policy being pushed by William Beveridge and other Liberals but opposed by trade unionists who felt that it might lead to a reduction of wages. At the same summer school, William Graham also lectured on 'The Living Wage' and Frederick Patrick-Lawrence spoke on 'Banking and Credit' and the views of John Strachey. These ideas, and particularly those on banking and credit, were developed by John Strachey who, at the 1925 ILP Summer School, worked with Oswald Mosley to deliver a paper on the need for control of banks to ensure the expansion of credit as the basis for stimulating consumer spending, industrial output and wages. This became the basis of their book, *Revolution by Reason* (1925).¹⁰³ Drawing from this fertile intellectual forum, Allen stressed the need for the national reorganisation of British finance, the need for financial stability, the national control of imports and the national ownership of power and transport.

The new approach to the introduction of socialist measures was well broadcast in the *New Leader* whose editor, Brailsford, brought his numerous articles together in his book, *Socialism for To-day* (1925).¹⁰⁴ This academic tour of socialism and its methods did not reject the possibility of revolutionary struggle, as occurred in Russia, but reflected the ILP's concern to introduce revolutionary socialism without bloodshed, which was to be 'an effort revolutionary in extent if not in method'.¹⁰⁵ Brailsford felt that the first Labour government could have done more to challenge the existing system instead of operating by it and that a future Labour government might demand that industries pay a living wage. He

also believed in the need for key industries to be nationalised, with the compensation of national stock bearing a fixed interest rate but that unearned income would be taxed by a graduated income tax. This became ILP policy, although Maxton was to reject the idea of compensation. Brailsford doubted whether this evolving policy could be achieved quickly, which meant that he was, in fact, sceptical of both the guild socialist ideas of the ILP Constitution of 1922 and the immediate state control of all industry, preferring workers' representation within the context of good management. All of this prepared him to advocate a 'Living Wage' within existing industry as a stage towards achieving state control. His views were thus ones which advocated a slow move towards socialism in which the Living Wage became part of raising the standard of living of the workers, ideas which would clash with the views of the Clydesiders, who wanted a more rapid transition to socialism. As a member of the 'Commission', it is not surprising that Brailsford's ideas found their way into *The Living Wage* report.

Oswald Mosley, who joined the ILP in 1924, was, as already suggested, to offer his version of the 'living wage' in the ILP Summer School of 1925. However, his views had already previously been aired in the *New Leader* in April 1924, in an article entitled 'A New Recruit's Defence of Labour'.¹⁰⁶ Mosley operated in Birmingham through the Ladywood branch of the ILP and produced his 'Birmingham proposals', which advocated the nationalisation of the Bank of England, bringing joint stock banks under public control, and the formation of a Banking Advisory Committee. Mosley's ideas became part of the debate in which ILP branches were consulted about 'The Living Wage' and were discussed by Mosley on 11 August 1925 when he spoke at the ILP Summer School at Easton Lodge. Although he was influenced by the expansionist and constructionist economic multiplier ideas of John Maynard Keynes and the Cambridge school of economists, Mosley developed his idea of 'banks for the People' idea, laid down in the 'Birmingham Proposals', and argued that there was to be an Economic Council whose purpose was to estimate the difference between actual and potential production and to arrange how potential production could be 'evoked through the instrument of working class demand'.¹⁰⁷ The Economic Council would fix the wages of firms from time to time with overdrafts from the state banks until it could be determined what firms should pay. It might establish minimum wage and or family allowances. Mosley's main purpose was to create demand and sustain demand as a way of raising living standards and challenging unemployment. The precise details may not have been an exact match, but they fitted well into the idea of the creation of some type of 'Living Wage', the ideas of which were being discussed by an ILP commission and by ILP branches. Mosley's ideas were thus one of the several tributaries that flowed into the 'Living Wage' debate being enacted by the ILP in the context of the failure of the Labour government to press forward with socialist measures.

At the very point when the policies of the 'Living Wage' and 'Socialism in Our Time' were emerging, the NAC and its members were also proposing other changes in the Labour Party to prevent gradualism, which they had so objected to in the first Labour government, from occurring again. It proposed that the officers,

executive and the Leader of the PLP should be elected each session, a policy eventually supported by the ILP Annual Conference in 1926. Jowett's proposal was that commissions should be set up at each department of state to control ministerial activity, and the allowance of more free votes which would allow MPs to redeem their electoral pledges from the need to follow the Party whip.¹⁰⁸ There was even an attempt within the ILP to depose MacDonald as Leader of the Labour Party, with the idea that Arthur Henderson would replace him, though nothing came of this suggestion since Allen, despite his criticisms of the first Labour government, remained a resolute supporter of MacDonald. Instead, Maxton, Wheatley, George Lansbury and Kirkwood decided to act as a 'ginger group' in Parliament, opposing most of the policies of the new Baldwin government, regardless of the position of the Labour Party. In addition, there were moves towards creating an ILP Parliamentary Group to tighten the control over ILP MPs, although it could rarely attract more than 50 of the 106 members, who were nominally its members.¹⁰⁹

Tensions between the ILP and the Labour Party were rising and, as a result, the two parties met in May 1925 to address their problems. Here, Allen was at pains to restate his belief in the educational, intellectual and propaganda role of the ILP. He had already made much of this point at the 1924 ILP Annual Conference when denigrating the parliamentary impact of the ILP in both the Labour Party and in the House of Commons.¹¹⁰ Arthur Henderson, for the Labour Party, played down that role and stressed the responsible actions of the Labour Party, warning that

So long as the two bodies present their individual policies without regard to each other party, it was obvious that overlapping and friction would continue, but in the view of the Party Executive circumstances had arisen which rendered it desirable that there should be a frank and full discussion of the whole position.¹¹¹

The 'frank and full' discussion were to develop over the next few years, and particularly under Maxton, after he became Chairman of the ILP in 1926. However, more immediately, these debates about the future relationship of the ILP and the Labour Party also led to increasing tensions within the ILP itself. Three of the ILP's middle-class MPs – Clem Attlee (Limehouse), C. R. Buxton (Accrington), C. P. Trevelyan (Newcastle-upon-Tyne Central) – had their candidatures removed from the ILP to their divisional Labour parties, and Brailsford effectively retired from active involvement in the ILP. Criticised for his large salary and because of the need for a popular paper at the NAC at Margate, of 9–11 October 1926, he resigned as editor of the *New Leader* and drifted out of the ILP. Snowden had been in disagreement with the ILP since his resignation as Treasurer in 1922 and became more geared towards the Labour Party. Despite his speeches criticising the Conservative Government action against the trade unions as a result of the General Strike, he came under criticism because of 'wild ravings' in suggesting that A. J. Cook, Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, 'Wanted the union of the Soviet Republic throughout the world'.¹¹² Snowden's embattled relationship with the ILP meant that his resignation in December 1927 was not

unexpected. However, it was problematic since a Colne Valley ILP Federation, of the local branches, had been formed to ensure his candidature and support for the ILP. In October 1927 he indicated to the Colne Valley ILP his wish to be removed from their candidature: 'The Secretary gave a report of an interview which he had, along with S. North, with Mr. Snowden, who stated during the interview, he did not wish to run under the auspices of the ILP at the next Election, but preferred to be a Divisional Labour Party candidate'.¹¹³ As a result, the Colne Valley felt that

this meeting is of opinion that the necessity for the Colne Valley ILP Federation has ceased to exist, and we advise branches who are at present affiliated to the ILP to seriously consider whether it is worthwhile continuing their membership of that body.¹¹⁴

In the end, the Colne Valley ILP Federation met in January 1928, and the New Mill, Meltham and Slaithwaite branches decided to continue their affiliation, whilst Milnsbridge decided to continue affiliation to the National ILP but not with the Federation, which agreed to carry on with only three branches.¹¹⁵ MacDonald had drifted away from his Scottish ILP supporters in the early 1920s, and his resignation in 1930 was expected and did not have the local impact that Snowden and some of the others did. Nevertheless, he had been supported in the mid and late 1920s by Ernest Hunter (responsible for the ILP Information Sheet), Allen and Salter in the mid and late 1920s, despite his differences with them over 'Socialism in Our Time' and because of their increasing disagreements with Maxton.

Allen, the most important figure, had resigned as Chairman of the ILP in the autumn of 1925. He attended the NAC of the ILP of 26–28 September 1925 but was unable to see it out on the grounds of ill health. On 1 October he sent in his resignation, on the grounds of ill health, to the NAC, but in a letter from him to Maxton, dated 21 October 1925, he indicated that there were other reasons for his resignation. Allen was on an ILP Commission on Compensation, which favoured compensation to be paid to owners on the nationalisation of their property, a policy endorsed by the ILP Annual Conference at York in 1925. Maxton rejected this idea, in contradiction of ILP policy, at the Liverpool Conference of the Labour Party in 1925, and Allen suggested that this was 'the most decisive factor in making me do what I did'.¹¹⁶ In effect, Allen had come to recognise that, despite all his efforts, the Clydesiders held the balance of power within the ILP.

The changes of fortunes were, however, not as fast and decisive as Brockway would have us believe when he wrote that

Under Maxton's leadership the ILP became aggressively socialist and proletarian. The middle-class experts . . . disappeared from Head Office overnight and those satisfied with the Labour Party either resigned or retained a nominal membership only.¹¹⁷

The process of change was far more prosaic than that, and most of those associated with Allen and *The Living Wage* had left the ILP by the end of the 1920s.

The Living Wage Report and the 'Socialism in Our Time' policy were published and adopted in 1926. Yet from the start it is clear that there were different views within the ILP as to the precise meaning of the 'Living Wage' and 'Socialism in Our Time'.

Brailsford had launched the campaign for 'The Living Wage' programme in the *New Leader* in January 1926, with the slogan 'Socialism in Our Day' and, like the *Bradford Pioneer*, offered it as an alternative to gradualism. Throughout 1926 there was a plethora of writings on 'The Living Wage', and indeed the idea of family allowances, most in favour but some critical.¹¹⁸ Many ILP branches seemed to support the idea, and Rennie Smith, the Labour MP for Penistone from 1924 to 1931, was particularly supportive.¹¹⁹ However, Ellen Wilkinson, the Labour MP, was critical for she felt that there would be lots of pointless haggling about the mythical living wage.¹²⁰ Yet the real criticism for the idea came from MacDonald, who felt that the ILP was presuming to dictate Labour Party policy when that was the purview of the PLP, although Brailsford published several articles in the *New Leader* and argued that the ILP had the right to develop policy and to present their views through the Labour Party conference.¹²¹ MacDonald, writing in *Forward* and *Socialist Review*, argued that the ILP should not 'strive to be ahead of the Labour Party in its manifestoes and resolutions upon Parliamentary tactics'.¹²² In addition he was doubtful whether or not the 'Living Wage' could be brought about by statutory enactment and that wage levels would be imposed by the Economic Council. In any case, his established view from before the Great War, and through his Fabian writings in his Socialist Library collection of books, was that socialism would come out of the success of capitalism, not its failure, as industry needed to be controlled by the state as it grew.

The 'Living Wage' policy and 'Socialism in Our Time' campaign was then debated and accepted at the 1926 ILP Easter Annual Conference held at Whitley Bay. Jowett, the temporary chairman after Allen's resignation, focused his speech on the 'Socialism in Our Time' campaign and argued that it was a new approach to politics, reminding the Labour Party that its object was to introduce socialism and tackle poverty 'whether Labour has a majority in the House of Commons or not'.¹²³ Brailsford presented the policy, and it was supported by Mosley and John Strachey before gaining the overwhelming support of the Conference, and it was published shortly afterwards. The policy (which appears in full in Appendix 2), was presented as the demand for a family allowance to be paid out of taxation, the nationalisation of the banking system to control credit, the government purchase of foodstuffs, and a National Minimum Wage to be organised by an Industrial Commission to re-organise industry and to take control of those industries that could not do so. All this was to be won by both parliamentary and industrial action. Further discussion was delayed by the nine-day General Strike of 1926, in which the ILP largely aided the publication of *The Miner*, which became the sole responsibility of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain in July 1926, and by H. N. Brailsford's special article of support in *New Leader*.¹²⁴

From the start, however, 'Socialism in Our Time' and 'The Living Wage' proved contentious both inside the ILP and outside, in the wider Labour movement. It

was generally supported by ILP branches and members in Scotland and London. Indeed, the Bilston ILP sent a letter to the managing director of a local dairy company in February 1927, complaining of the 'attitude of the directors against their employees democratic demands for a living wage'.¹²⁵ However, *Labour's Northern Voice*, the organ of the Lancashire ILP, favoured 'a full socialist policy', rather than what was seen to be a compromise with capitalism.¹²⁶ Indeed, A. W. Martin, of Salford ILP Federation, felt that the ILP had never been able to come to terms with the demand for a living wage because of the boggy foreign competition and was sceptical of it being supported.¹²⁷ Some ILPers in the textile region of the West Riding of Yorkshire felt similarly. The Bradford ILP, for instance, first discussed the 'living wage' policy in February 1926, before its official adoption, and voted in its favour only after raising a wide range of criticisms. Councillor Brooke was 'anxious lest trade union powers should be undermined', whilst others felt that the whole programme would 'bolster the whole capitalist system'.¹²⁸ One critic felt that the policy was too previous: 'fathered by Impatience and mothered in Piety'.¹²⁹ Indeed, when Brailsford lectured on the policy at St. George's Hall, Bradford, in September 1926, explaining that it should be seen as a transition stage from capitalism to socialism, necessary because unemployment and poverty would still persist during the period of redistribution of property and income, he was heckled by a small group who dubbed him a 'Liberal'. Harold Child, an old Bradford stalwart, emphatically demanded the 'immediate nationalization of everything'.¹³⁰ There also appears to have been sufficient doubt about the policy to necessitate a very large supportive campaign programme throughout West Yorkshire in 1926 and 1927. Percy Hamer lectured on 'Socialism in Our Time' to the Armley ILP branch in Leeds in April 1927, and Jowett felt compelled to explain the policy in four articles for the *Bradford Pioneer* as late as September 1927, such were the local doubts about it.

MacDonald and the Labour Party attacked the policy and campaign, adding further to the tensions that were developing between them and the ILP at this time. MacDonald attacked the policy even before it was accepted by the ILP in 1926, suggesting in *Socialist Review* that it would be like 'millstones around its [PLP] neck in the shape of an ill-digested scheme of minimum wage'.¹³¹ He felt that the PLP could not be saddled with the policy, that the ILP had run out of ideas and that there were dangers inherent within the policy. Ernest Bevin, the trade union leader, and Rhys Davies, a trade union-sponsored Labour MP, backed this up with the feeling that the new policy took power away from the trade unions and was an admission that 'trade unionism is played out'.¹³² In a final attempt to take the policy discussion out of the hands of the ILP, the Executive Committee of the Labour Party set up a commission with the TUC to examine the Living Wage and Family Allowances. When it reported in July 1930, a majority report favoured child allowances but a minority report condemned family allowances in favour of an extension of social services, and this was accepted by the General Council of the TUC by a vote of 16 to 8.¹³³

Such rejection of the 'Living Wage' and 'Socialism in Our Time' policies persisted to the point at which the ILP felt the need to reinvigorate the campaign

in the late 1920s. 'Socialism with speed' was not working, and in February 1929 the *New Leader* began to press for a second Labour government to introduce the 'Living Incomes policy' if and when it came to power.¹³⁴ Elijah Sandham organised 'The Living Wage Conference' with 350 delegates from the Lancashire Division the same month, stressing that the policy was about raising the standard of living of workers and public control of the 'essentials of the nation's economic and industrial life'.¹³⁵ However, Emrys Hughes, writing in *Forward*, also in the same month, suggested that the policy was flawed, whilst Brailsford was becoming dispirited about the failure of the Labour Party to acknowledge the policy.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, Brockway included 'The Living Income Report' in his 'Issues at the ILP Conference where he reflected upon the dichotomy between those who saw it as spearheading change and those who were prepared to temporarily accept the 'practical minimum'. Maxton made his Chairman's speech at the 1929 ILP Annual Conference about the policy, suggesting that it provided the road to public ownership, and increased working-class control over industry in what was possibly a reminder to the ILP's guild constitution of 1922.¹³⁷ He was able to further reflect upon the attempt to harmonise the policy at the 1928 Conference and the fact that John Paton was seeking to block the policy. The policy had become mixed up with P. J. Dollan's advocacy of a £4 a week minimum wage and the Cook-Maxton manifesto, which had divided the ILP in 1928.¹³⁸ By that time Maxton was already thinking about developing a more revolutionary policy, and the last embers of 'The Living Wage' policy and the 'Socialism in Our Time' campaign were dying, and when private members of 'The Living Wage Bill 1931' never got the support of the Labour Party for discussion on the floor of the House of Commons, it was time to change.

Party finances and membership in the mid and late 1920s

It is impossible to ignore the fact that throughout the struggles with the Labour Party and within the ILP, the Allen years had brought growth to the ILP in the form of more branches, more members and better finances. Membership, as already indicated, had reached 34,000 'good on the books' from the claimed 56,000 members of 1925. Allen's departure meant an enormous loss in the number of branches and members. The 'good on the books' membership had fallen to 21,000 by 1929, though notionally figures of 35,000 and more were being claimed.¹³⁹ In addition, as Table 3.1 indicates, the number of branches fell by a quarter with a decline in affiliation fees in all divisions of the ILP, as indicated in Table 3.3.

The precarious financial situation that arose was only alleviated in 1927 by a bequest of £8,291, and in May 1931 the crisis was reached when the ILP owed £2,000 and had only £200 in the bank, which led to salary cuts and the reduction of subsidies to the *New Leader*.

Even the Scottish Division, the stronghold of the ILP in Scotland, was just holding its own from the mid-1920s onwards. Indeed, even Glasgow, at this time the most successful city for the ILP in Britain, was struggling to keep members. In 1925–1926, nine of the Glasgow branches increased their total membership by

Table 3.1 The decline in ILP income and branches, 1926–1929¹⁴⁰

<i>Year (Feb)</i>	<i>Affiliation fees</i>	<i>Quota</i>	<i>Donations</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Branches</i>
	£	£	£	£	
1926	3,467	1,413	3,369	8,249	1,075
1927	2,682	1,215	3,279	8,178	949
1928	2,532	1,225	2,677	6,435	826
1929	2,085	1,009	2,389	5,483	746

Table 3.2 Excess of ILP expenditures over income, 1926–1929¹⁴¹

<i>Year</i>	<i>Amount</i>
1926	£4,526
1927	£2,598
1928	£1,553
1929	£1,318

Table 3.3 Decline in affiliation fees, 1927–1929¹⁴²

<i>Division</i>	<i>1927–8</i>	<i>1928–9</i>
£	£	
Scotland	601	480
North-East	150	120
Yorkshire	352	329
Midlands	297	212
East Anglia	65	46
London	397	336
South-West	64	45
Wales and Monmouth	118	111
Lancashire	488	409

104, the City branch being responsible for 25 of that increase alone. Seven others had the same membership as in the previous year, but the other 17 saw membership decline by 236; Townhead losing 30, Hutchesontown and Scotstoun 20. An overall loss of 136 members had occurred for the 33 listed local ILP branches.¹⁴³ The situation stabilised between 1926–1927, for whilst 14 branches increased their membership by 226, the other 14 lost 235 members. Eight other branches remained with the membership that they had the previous year, and, of course there were now 36 branches. Of those that survived, Townhead, which had lost 30 members the year before, had regained 30 members, and Anderston also gained 30 members, reversing its loss of ten members the year before. Govan, where

membership had not changed the year before, lost 40 members and Queen's Cross lost 35 members, having increased its membership by 15 the year before.¹⁴⁴ After that there appears to have been a gradual loss of branches and membership, as indicated in the tables shown earlier, although Glasgow still had significant success in the municipal elections, returning 44 of its 80 candidates.¹⁴⁵ The ILP in Glasgow had clearly reached its zenith of about 5,000 members, a figure which remained constant throughout the 1920s. This, as will become evident, changed dramatically in the early 1930s with industrial decline in Glasgow. William Regan, the Secretary of the Glasgow Federation, recorded a loss of 349 men and 64 women in four months in mid-1930. With 50 per cent of the ILP membership unemployed by mid-1933 the membership of the ILP in Glasgow had shrunk to 1,200.¹⁴⁶

Conclusion

The Allen years were, by far, the most successful ones in the history of the inter-war ILP. They saw the ILP improve its financial position and an expansion in the administration and organisation of the party. They were fruitful in terms of intellectual discussions about the future of socialism and the development of the alternatives towards the gradualism of the Labour Party. Membership increased and finances improved greatly as the Party grew in confidence. However, the balance of power had changed by the mid-1920s. Maxton, Wheatley and the Clydesiders, with the support of up to 5,000 paying ILP members, had come to the fore, and Allen had come to recognise this fact and resigned, and would probably have done so even without the excuse of ill health. The next few years were to see the ILP struggle with its socialist policy and the Labour Party as it tried to find a distinctive role for itself in socialist politics. This process, which was a perennial feature of ILP politics, was to lead to a decline of membership even in its heartland of Scotland, to make it a smaller and far more sectarian party as it struggled with its new policy of 'Socialism in Our Time', and possible alternatives, to bring about the chimera of a permanent state of democratic socialism in Britain. Indeed, the move for a new policy to push the ILP forward in new directions had already emerged well before the 'Living Wage' and 'Socialism in Our Time' campaigns failed.

Notes

- 1 Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 145.
- 2 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, pp. 75–8.
- 3 *Labour Leader*, 20 April 1922 and Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 142.
- 4 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 76.
- 5 Marwick, *Clifford Allen*, p. 77.
- 6 NAC Report, 1923; Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 73.
- 7 ILP Annual Conference Report, 1925, pp. 10–12; Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 79.
- 8 Annual Report of the Welsh Divisional Council, April 1925; Stanton Papers at the BLPEs; Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 79.
- 9 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 78.
- 10 ILP NAC 3/14, Minutes 28–30 August 1924.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 23 March and 25–26 June 1922.

- 12 *Labour Leader*, 14 April, 20 May and 7 July 1921; ILP NAC, 3/13, Minutes, 19, 20 and 23 June 1921. Carter was appointed to replace Bundock, who was a trade unionist, a CO in the First World, an editor of newspapers and Bundock became general secretary of the National Union of Journalists in 1937.
- 13 ILP NAC 3/14, Minutes 12 May 1922.
- 14 *Labour Leader*, 6 October 1922.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *ILP Annual Conference Report, 1923*, p. 19.
- 17 ILP NAC Minutes, 21 November 1924 and 1–2 December 1924.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 12 May 1922. Apart from the two titled indicated another three were referred to as being published. They were *The ILP and the Trade Unions*, *The ILP and the National Front*, and *The ILP and International Policy*.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 3/16, Minutes, 28–30 August and 2 December 1924.
- 20 ILP, *Information Committee 'The Spearhead of the Labour Movement' (J. Ramsay MacDonald Easter 1920)*, London, ILP, 1925. This simply quotes about 25 or 30 prominent figures of the ILP on their views on the 'Weekly Notes for Speakers'. They are all positive and effusive in their comments, which were made between 1922 and 1925.
- 21 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 88.
- 22 *New Leader*, 26 June 1925.
- 23 *Labour Leader*, 3 November, 29 December 1922.
- 24 ILP NAC, inserted in the Minutes for 1922; Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 32.
- 25 *Now for Socialism! The Call of the ILP*.
- 26 ILP NAC Minutes, 2 December 1924; *The Report of the Annual Conference held at Gloucester*, p. 7, 614 branches in February 1922, and 637 in February 1923, 772 in February 1924, and 1,028 in February 1925.
- 27 Glasgow ILP Federation Minutes, 18 April 1919.
- 28 *Bradford Pioneer*, 7 June 1929.
- 29 *Leeds Citizen*, 19 February 1926.
- 30 *Bradford Pioneer*, 10 September 1926.
- 31 ILP NAC Minutes, 7 September 1923.
- 32 NAC Minutes, 7 September 1923, 23–24 February 1924, and 31 January–1 February 1926.
- 33 ILP NAC Minutes, 23–24 February 1924; Glasgow ILP Federation Minutes, Annual Report 1925–6, p. 4.
- 34 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 90.
- 35 ILP NAC Minutes, 2 December 1924.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 22–23 May 1925.
- 37 NAC 3/18, Minutes, 13–14 February 1926.
- 38 *Labour's Northern Voice*, 29 October 1926. The paper was formed as the Lancashire Divisional ILP paper in 1925.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 8 March 1929, indicates that the Bolton Guild had 30 members, that a new Guild had been opened in Hyde, that there had been the revival of a Guild at Nelson, and that the Preston Guild was very active.
- 40 NAC Minutes, 24–25 July 1926.
- 41 Christine Collette, *For Labour and For Women: Women's Labour League, 1906–1918*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1989.
- 42 ILP NAC Minutes, 2 December 1924.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 31 January–2 February 1925.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 14 April 1925.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 22–23 May 1925.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 7–8 March 1925.
- 47 *New Leader*, 30 March 1923.
- 48 ILP NAC Minutes, 22 April 1924; Bullock, *Under Siege*, p. 78.

- 49 D. Blaazer, 'Guild Socialists after Guild Socialism: The Workers' Control Group and the House of Industry League', *Twentieth Century British History*, 11.2 (2000).
- 50 Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*.
- 51 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, pp. 80–1. The NAC voted by 283 to 174 against giving the NAC more powers.
- 52 Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow*, p. 69 and Paton, *Left Turn*, p. 156.
- 53 Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*.
- 54 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 92; Bullock, *Under Siege*, chapter 4 'Ramsay MacDonald and the ILP: A Mutual Ambivalence', pp. 41–56.
- 55 Manny Shinwell, *Lead with the Left*, Worthing, Littlehampton Books, 1981, p. 83; Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 92.
- 56 Kirkwood, *My Life of Revolt*, p. 195.
- 57 Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (eds), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain Since 1820*, London, Scholar Press, 1996; Richard Toye, "'Perfectly Parliamentary"? The Labour Party and the House of Commons in the Inter-War Years', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25.2 (2014), 1–29; Richard Toye, 'J. H. Whitley as Speaker of the House of Commons. 1921–1928', in John A. Hargreaves, Keith Laybourn, and Richard Toye (eds), *Liberal Reform and Industrial Relations: J. H. Whitley (1866–1935), Halifax Radical and Speaker of the House of Commons*, London, Routledge, 2017.
- 58 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 95.
- 59 *Hansard*, 27 June 1923.
- 60 Brown, *Maxton; New Leader*, 29 June, 6 July 1923.
- 61 John McNair, *James Maxton: The Beloved Rebel*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1955, p. 125.
- 62 *The Socialist Programme: The Constructive Proposals of the Independent Labour Party: General Election Statement [of] Clifford Allen, A. Fenner Brockway and Ernest E. Hunter*, 22 November 1923, London, ILP, 1923, p. 3.
- 63 *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 49.
- 65 *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 67 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 102 suggests the return of 45 MPs.
- 68 ILP NAC Minutes for 1923, list of General Election returns for 1923. The result was that Division 5 (Scotland) returned 18 MPs, Division 2 (North-East) 3, Division 3 (Yorkshire), Division 4 (Midlands) 2, Division 5 (East Anglia) 2, Division 6 (London) 8, Division 7 (South Western) 1, Division 8 (Wales) 5, and Division 9 (Lancashire) 2. The total was 47 from 93 contests, in order of Division, the number of candidates put forward was 25, 5, 11, 9, 3, 24, 4, 7, and 5.
- 69 The nine were C. R. Attlee, W. Graham, Morgan Jones, William Leach, Arthur Ponsonby, Ben Spoor, Manny Shinwell, J. W. Muir, and J. Stewart.
- 70 *Socialist Review*, May 1924.
- 71 *Nation*, 6 February 1924.
- 72 Clifford Allen's speech later appeared as *Putting Socialism into Practice: The President's Address*, London, ILP, 1924.
- 73 Brockway, *Socialism Over Sixty Years*, p. 214; Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, pp. 110–11.
- 74 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, pp. 106–7.
- 75 ILP NAC Minutes, 23–25 May 1924. The NAC of the ILP was pressing forward with the demands of the Glasgow Trades Council that the Bank of England should use monetary policy to tackle unemployment.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 17 May 1924.
- 77 *New Leader*, 8 August 1921, and letter from Allen, 16 September 1924, the letter quotes in Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 107.
- 78 ILP NAC Minutes, 28–31 August 1924.

- 79 John Shepherd and Keith Laybourn, *The First Labour Government*, London, Palgrave, 2006.
- 80 Birmingham City ILP Minutes, 1 January 1925.
- 81 *Leicester Pioneer*, 18 July 1924; *Bradford Pioneer*, 30 July 1924; Shepherd and Laybourn, *Britain's First Labour Government*, pp. 143–4.
- 82 Birmingham City ILP Minutes, 4 June 1925, where it was declared that the ILP Easter Conference on the Zinovieff Letter was 'singularly disappointing'.
- 83 J. Ramsay MacDonald published. *The History of the ILP*, London, ILP, 1921 but updated it as *The Story of the ILP and What It Stands For*, London, ILP Information Committee, 1924, p. 2.
- 84 Kirkwood, *My Life of Revolt*, p. 228.
- 85 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 114; *New Leader*, 31 October 1924.
- 86 NAC Minutes, 19 November 1927; Report of NAC to the 1927 Annual Conference, p. 11; and NAC Minutes, 10 June 1928.
- 87 Allen, *Putting Socialism into Practice*, p. 6.
- 88 Clifford Allen, *Socialism and the Next Labour Government: The Presidential Address of Clifford Allen at the ILP Annual Conference, 1925*, London, ILP, 1925, pp. 6–7.
- 89 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 90 *Resolutions to Be Presented to the 33rd Annual Conference [ILP], 12–14 April at Gloucester. Final Agenda*, London, ILP, 1925, p. 19. It was opposed by Joseph Southall (1861–1944), who was a prominent member of the Birmingham Arts and Crafts Movement and was a Quaker opposed to militarism and war.
- 91 Peter James Thwaites, 'The Independent Labour Party, 1938–1950', PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 1976, p. 28; Clifford Allen, *The ILP and Revolution: Chairman's Speech to the ILP Summer School, Easton Lodge, August 1925*, pp. 3 and 10; Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, quoting the NAC statement to the 1926 ILP Conference.
- 92 *Labour's Northern Voice*, 10 September 1926, 5 August 1927.
- 93 There are numerous examples of ILP municipal election sheets and handouts advocating these types of policies in the political ephemera sections in the Bradford Archives department of West Riding Archives.
- 94 *A Living Wage for All*, by William Crook MP. *An Appeal for a Weekly Minimum Wage of 30 Shillings. A Speech Given in the House of Commons, 26 April 1911*, London, ILP, 1911.
- 95 *A Living Wage for All. Dr. Salter's Speech in the House of Commons on 7 March 1923*, London, Bermondsey Independent Labour Party, 1923; *New Leader*, 7 March 1924.
- 96 Howell, *MacDonald's Party*, p. 264.
- 97 John Paton, *Left Turn: The Autobiography of John Paton*, London, Seeker and Warburg, 1936, p. 311.
- 98 *New Leader*, 14 December 1923.
- 99 *ILP Conference Report 1924*, pp. 98–100.
- 100 *ILP Conference Report 1925*, pp. 88–9.
- 101 *New Leader*, 22 August 1924, 30 January 1924, and 17 April 1925.
- 102 *Ibid.*, 3 July 1925.
- 103 *Ibid.*, 18 June and 22 August 1924.
- 104 Henry Noel Brailsford, *Socialism for Today*, London, ILP, 1925; Bullock, *Under Siege*, pp. 103–7.
- 105 Bullock, *Under Siege*, pp. 68–9.
- 106 *New Leader*, 11 April 1924.
- 107 Oswald Mosley, *Revolution by Reason, An Account of the Financial Proposals Submitted by Oswald Mosley*, London, Leonard Pearson, 1925, x–xi, 14–15, and *Mosley at the Thirty-Third Independent Labour Party Conference, and Endorsed by the Birmingham Borough Labour Party and the ILP Federation*.

- 108 NAC Minutes, 1–2 December 1924; ILP Conference Report, 1925, pp. 126–31.
- 109 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 119.
- 110 Allen, *Putting Socialism into Practice*, pp. 34–5.
- 111 NEC Minutes of the Labour Party, Labour Party Archive, 23 May 1925, Joint Meeting of the NEC of the Labour Party and NAC of the ILP.
- 112 *Labour's Northern Voice*, 14 January 1927.
- 113 Colne Valley ILP Federation, 25 October 1927, Resolution 4.
- 114 *Ibid.*, 25 October 1927, Resolution 5.
- 115 *Ibid.*, 31 January 1928.
- 116 ILP NAC Minutes, 26–28 September 1925. Also, despite Dowse suggesting that there was a NAC meeting on 1 October 1925, there was no such meeting. Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, pp. 124–5.
- 117 Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 185.
- 118 *New Leader*, 1 January 1926, an article by Rennie Smith (1888–1962) who was a Labour MP for Penistone from 1924 to 1931; 8 January, 2 April 1926, 15 October 1926.
- 119 *New Leader*, 1 January 1926 and others 8 January and 2 April 1926,
- 120 *Ibid.*, 8 January 1926.
- 121 *Ibid.*, 26 February 1926.
- 122 *Forward*, 27 March 1926.
- 123 Frederick William Jowett, *Socialism in Our Time*, London, ILP, 1926, p. 4.
- 124 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 128, Birmingham City ILP Minutes, 3 June 1926 asked for the reprint of the Brailsford article as a pamphlet.
- 125 Bilston ILP Minute Books, Executive Committee 27 February 1927.
- 126 *Labour's Northern Voice*, 24 December 1925, 16 April and 17 December 1926.
- 127 *Ibid.*, 24 December 1926. However, the 13 May 1927 issue suggested some support from the West Salford ILP.
- 128 *Bradford Pioneer*, 5 February. 1926.
- 129 *Ibid.*, 9 April 1926.
- 130 *Ibid.*, 1 October 1926.
- 131 *Socialist Review*, March 1926.
- 132 *New Leader*, 2 November 1928; Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, pp. 134–5.
- 133 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 135.
- 134 *New Leader*, 15 February 1929.
- 135 *Labour's Northern Voice*, 22 February 1929.
- 136 *Forward*, 16 April 1929.
- 137 James Maxton, MP, *Roads to Socialism: Chairman's Address to the ILP Conference, 1929*, London, ILP, 1929, 506.
- 138 *New Leader*, 5 April 1929; *Forward*, 6 April 1929.
- 139 *ILP Annual Conference Report*, 1929.
- 140 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 150.
- 141 *Ibid.*
- 142 *Ibid.*
- 143 Glasgow ILP, EC Annual Report, 1925–6, pp. 3–4.
- 144 *Ibid.*, EC Annual Report, 1926–7, pp. 3–4.
- 145 *Ibid.*, ILP, EC Annual Report, 1926–7, p. 5.
- 146 Alan McKinlay and James J. Smyth, 'The End of the "Agitator Workman" 1926–1932', in McKinlay and Morris (eds), *The ILP on Clydeside 1893–1932*, pp. 183–4.

4 Conflict with the Labour Party and Labour government, and disaffiliation c. 1928–1932

Reasoned debate or emotional suicide?

Relations between the ILP and the Labour Party were fractious throughout the 1920s, particularly in the wake of the failure of the first Labour government to push forward with socialist measures. The gradualism of that government had evoked a criticism within the ILP that encouraged the emergence of the ‘Socialism in Our Time’ policy. This was to rekindle the whole debate about the future relations of the ILP to the Labour Party, which was further inflamed by a series of events that finally led to the disaffiliation of the ILP from the Labour Party in 1932. These events saw the ILP move beyond internal conflict between the Maxton/Wheatley anti-Labour Party group and the Leach/Shinwell pro-Labour Party group, to the verge of disintegration as the contours of debate narrowed and became embittered over three important events. The first was the Cook-Maxton Manifesto of 21 June 1928, an abortive attempt to create a new alliance of the Labour Left. The second was the failures of the second Labour government (1929–1931), which led Maxton to re-emphasise ‘that socialism could be no longer approached by a ‘long, slow process of gradualist, peaceful, Parliamentary change’, adding the cry ‘let your slogan be, Socialism is the only remedy’.¹ The third was an attempt by the Labour Party to prevent ILP MPs from voting freely, through invoking its Standing Orders (1929) being used to instruct all Labour Party MPs, including those sponsored by the ILP, on how to vote. This final event led to the disaffiliation of the ILP from the Labour Party at a Special Conference held at Bradford at the end of July 1932, itself a cause of serious debate between historians who have seen it contrastingly as the product of either reasoned debate or emotional ‘suicide’.² In many respects the ILP was itself imploding at the very moment that these events were detaching it from the Labour Party, and it is clear that the reasoned and rational actions of both the disaffiliationists and the anti-disaffiliationists operated in an emotionally and personally charged climate of conflict over the future direction of the ILP that started the process whereby it moved from being a viable political party to becoming yet another powerless sect of the Left by the end of the 1930s

The future of the ILP

Even though ‘Socialism in Our Time’ was the official policy of the ILP, there was, by 1928, a clear feeling that it was failing and that the ILP should find itself

a new role and more clearly define its relationship with the Labour Party. Some of the ILP members were already considering this, and John Gibson, in an article entitled 'Is the ILP Obsolete?' referred to the Kilmarnock Conference where P. J. Dollan had suggested that the ILP needed to have youth on its side and 'that the Kilmarnock Conference was sending missionaries to every corner of Scotland'.³ Indeed, on the 9th and 10th of June 1928 the NAC of the ILP held a closed meeting to discuss its future relations with the Labour Party. Manny Shinwell, an increasingly estranged Clydeside ILP MP, focused upon the fundamental question, concluding that

In his view the ILP couldn't get a distinctive policy. There was no hope of the ILP setting itself up in opposition to the Labour Party either politically or in organisation. This led him to ask what was the function of the ILP? Was it to become a definitely socialist propaganda body having few if any responsibilities?

He favoured a new party organisation

which had a relatively small effective membership of Socialist missionaries, locally and nationally affiliated to the Labour Party . . . becoming a Socialist missionary body cutting loose from its present political entanglements. He realised that this raised some difficult questions with regard to continued affiliation of the ILP with the Labour Party.⁴

Others offered their own alternative vision. Mosley felt that the ILP had to be built up into an active, rather than academic, body of socialist missionaries within the Labour Party. Jowett believed that there was a need to clarify 'the relationship between the Labour Party and the ILP'. Frank Wise felt that the ILP lacked a group in the House of Commons and doubted its future as a distinctive party, whilst John Paton, the General Secretary, opposed the abandonment of political activity, feeling that it had a distinctive policy that lay in 'the root idea of the Living Income Programme'. Therefore, this meeting vitally captured the continuing belief that the ILP had lost its way following the introduction of the Labour Party's socialist constitution in 1918 and posed a basic question – was the ILP to continue as an affiliated socialist organisation to the Labour Party, with its MPs subject to the control of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), or should it consider becoming a small independent propaganda group either inside or outside the Labour Party?

Between 1928 and 1932, faced with the failures of both socialist gradualism and 'Socialism in Our Time', the ILP moved slowly and almost prosaically towards its more 'revolutionary' position, looking towards trade union action rather than parliamentary democracy, to create a socialist workers' commonwealth. Consequently, the Labour Party and the ILP were following different paths to secure socialism. Many ILP activists felt that parliamentary democracy prevented significant socialist change, emphasised that the Labour Party was a party of the

working class and that more direct means of securing socialism should be pursued. The Labour Party's vision, perhaps because of its protean nature, was based upon the essentially progressive and liberal conceptions of winning broad support across all social classes for its gradualist moves towards the state control of industry. To the ILP, pure socialism was thus seen as being incompatible with the British parliamentary democracy that the Labour Party pursued.

Ross McKibbin has, indeed, endorsed such an interpretation, arguing that the British parliamentary system was anathema to the socialist state envisaged by the ILP, because it involved general elections which could return different parties with different objectives in perpetuity.⁵ Jon Lawrence's work on the transformation of British public politics after the First World War also offers a further clue to the divergence of the Labour Party and the ILP, observing that the Labour Party championed the more peaceable, rational and unassertive policies that emerged in the inter-war years, with less interaction between the politicians and the people, than the exuberant 'rowdyism' that was favoured by the ILP.⁶ Lawrence, indeed, reflects that after the criticism of Labour 'rowdyism' at the general elections of 1924, particularly in the ILP strongholds of Glasgow and London, there was an increasing tendency for Labour Party leaders to promote Party discipline. This contrasts with Maxton's penchant for 'applauding disorder as evidence of working-class "self-expression"', and his disruptive behaviour and that had led to his suspension from the House of Commons in June 1923.⁷ The Labour Party's Standing Orders of 1929, a pretext for the ILP's disaffiliation from the Labour Party, were seen as part of that process of imposing discipline and restricting individual freedom of expression in the parliamentary context, which was rejected by much of the ILP. However, before this bigger issue of disaffiliation loomed large, the ILP was deeply divided by the actions of Maxton, its chairman, on what appeared to be an attempt to form a new socialist party.

The Cook-Maxton Manifesto, 1928

Maxton was a controversial figure in the House of Commons who normally steered his own course rather than that of the Labour Party. As already established, Maxton had an embattled relationship with Allen. This had arisen partly over the fact that Allen had supported the Labour Party's Liverpool Conference (1925) decision of compensating the owners of industries that were going to be nationalised in contrast to the view of the ILP Finance Committee.⁸ Allen had resigned as chairman, to be replaced by Jowett and then Maxton. In effect, this meant that from the autumn of 1925, Maxton shaped the ILP into an organisation which criticised the actions and Labour leadership of MacDonald, which manifested itself in the 'MacDonald Debate' of 1927 where the NAC decided not to support MacDonald for the post of Treasurer of the Labour Party, a post which MacDonald had held since 1912 and which he held until the 1929 Labour Party Conference.⁹

Maxton also created tensions within the ILP by implying that its actions were not sufficient to bring about 'Socialism In Our Time'. The most dramatic evidence

of this was his attempt to create a new Left-Wing party with A. J. Cook, the Welsh secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain who had been a founding member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The famous Cook-Maxton Manifesto was announced in June 1928, eleven days after the NAC's closed meeting on the ILP's future, and was a direct challenge to the ILP's continuation as an independent party and academic grouping 'gingering up' the Labour Party to the need for the introduction of socialist policies, and making an approach to the communist party. The Cook-Maxton Manifesto was a short statement calling for an unceasing war against poverty and the servitude of the working class, and a return to the British Labour Movement representing the working class, instead of the whole nation, which the Labour Party favoured. It argued that there was a need for a new party to return to the old aims of Keir Hardie.¹⁰ In order to gauge the level of support for this initiative, pledge cards were circulated to sign, stating that 'I pledge myself to support the efforts of Messrs Maxton and Cook towards establishing the New Order with all possible speed'.¹¹ It is clear that the Manifesto would, as R. D. Denman, the prospective parliamentary Labour candidate for Leeds Central put it, be 'regarded by many as an unpleasant bombshell'.¹² Indeed, that was to be the case of this abortive attempt to create a new Left-Wing party, which was challenged both inside and outside of the ILP.

The Birmingham City ILP gave it its 'whole-hearted support'.¹³ The Keighley ILP endorsed the Manifesto at a Special Meeting on 16 July 1928.¹⁴ The Scottish Division of the ILP at first appeared to strongly support the Manifesto at a mass meeting at Cumnock, where David Kirkwood advocated it in opposition to Dollan, Wise, and Shinwell, who vehemently opposed it.¹⁵ Arthur Woodburn, the Scottish ILP activist, writing in the *Labour Standard*, stated that 'The Maxton-Cook Manifesto is the biggest, boldest step, that has been taken. . . . We can no longer stand by and see thirty years of detailed work destroyed in making peace with capitalism'.¹⁶ In contrast, Dollan, a powerful figure in the Scottish Divisional Council of the ILP and committed to the ILP working to help the Labour Party, expressed his views in the Labour Party's *Daily Herald*, arguing that the embryonic party would lead to the formation of new cliques.¹⁷ His opposition and, indeed, that of Emrys Hughes, the editor of *Forward*, was further evident when David Kirkwood sought £5,000 for the Manifesto campaign at the same time as the NAC was facing a deficit of £1,553, an action which Dollan roundly condemned.¹⁸ Brockway, writing in the *New Leader*, also criticised Maxton for taking action whilst he was chairman of the ILP and without any prior discussions with the Party.¹⁹ John Paton, Secretary of the ILP and a supporter of Maxton, also threatened his resignation and noted in his autobiography that there had been very little warning of the announcement and that the development of a new party would have meant the loss of ILP members to the new party.²⁰

There followed a spat in the Labour press in which there was considerable debate as to whether or not Maxton had ever intended to form a new party.²¹ At the NAC meeting of 30 June 1928, Maxton denied that he had intended to form a new party and it may be that, as Dowse suggests, he had intended to avoid conflict within the ILP by presenting the creation of a new party as a *fait accompli*.²² It has

also been suggested that Willie Gallacher, a member of the Central Committee of the CPGB, may have arranged for Maxton to meet Cook and that he could even have written the Manifesto, though this is questionable in the light of the fact that the Central Committee of the CPGB described the Manifesto as naïve at its meeting on 22 June 1929.²³

Dollan persisted with his criticism at the NAC Meeting of 7 July 1928, when he questioned the constitutional position of the chairman of the NAC proposing to form a new socialist party.²⁴ However, he failed by a vote of seven to five to get the ILP to reject its participation in the Manifesto campaign, although Frank Wise and Dorothy Jewson, members of the NAC, argued that the Manifesto was 'intended to disrupt' and re-iterated that the inter-war position of the ILP as being a 'distinctive policy . . . which rejects . . . both the inevitability of gradualness and the inevitability of violent revolution'.²⁵ At this meeting, Wise's compromise was accepted instead, supporting the 'spirit and intention' of the Manifesto and encouraging branches and members to co-operate to secure a strong socialist programme. This was clearly an attempt to pour oil on troubled waters. It failed to do so. The Cook-Maxton Manifesto had divided both the ILP and the Labour Party over the issue of the perceived failures of both their policies for socialism.

The dichotomy in both the ILP and Labour opinion was further demonstrated at the first Manifesto meetings held, firstly at St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, on 7 July 1928, before 3,000 to 4,000 people and, secondly, at Manchester Free Trade Hall shortly afterwards. Neither were the success for which Maxton and Cook had hoped. At the first meeting, Maxton admitted that there was more support for gradualism than even for 'Socialism in Our Time', and some obfuscation as to the intent of the meeting.²⁶ At the second meeting, though the campaign was endorsed by the North West Division of the ILP, it was disowned by the Miles Platting Branch of the ILP and other local branches.²⁷

Cook and Maxton defended their Manifesto in a short pamphlet entitled *Our Case for a Socialist Revival*, which argued the need for class struggle against its perceived abandonment by the Labour Party and the trade union movement.²⁸ What was required, it suggested, was a more socialist Labour Party, speedy nationalisation of industries, and a powerful trade union movement prepared to support a Socialist government in the struggle to expropriate the capitalist class. This was a clear attack on the 'Socialism in Our Time' campaign and a restatement the Manifesto campaign to create a new Left-wing alliance.

Yet the Manifesto clearly continued to divide the ILP throughout the country. Wheatley and the Clydeside MPs were supportive of Maxton in his campaign for a new, wider ILP, whereas Dollan and the Scottish Federation remained much more committed to the Labour Party. Salter and his Bermondsey branch supported MacDonald and the Labour Party. William Leach of Bradford and Manny Shinwell were also drifting into a closer relationship with the Labour Party. Indeed, in November 1928 Leach and Dr. Salter organised a secret meeting of 28 ILP MPs who supported MacDonald and pronounced that 'the ILP had exhausted its usefulness', and expressed concern at Maxton's 'reckless leadership'.²⁹ Salter wrote to the *New Leader* that they did not want to see the ILP

driven to the rocks by the pirate chief who has run the Jolly Roger to the masthead, and who is co-operating with his fellow buccaneer who has already done his best to wreck and shatter another great vessel, the MFGB.³⁰

Such views were subsequently rejected by a larger body of ILP MPs, and at the 1929 ILP Annual Conference, where only C. Roden Buxton, of the 28 ILP MPs who had met secretly to criticise the Manifesto, was present. There was also strong condemnation of ILP MPs who never carried out ILP policy and were, in effect, solely Labour MPs.³¹

Nevertheless, faced with widespread opposition, Maxton moved his Manifesto campaigning firmly back within the ILP and finally abandoned it altogether in April 1929.³² Cook and Maxton's tentative liaison with the CPGB, largely through Cook's old connections, had also come to an end as Maxton was expelled from the communist-dominated League Against Imperialism just at the point that Cook condemned communist activities within the Miners' Federation.³³

It was later claimed by the *New Leader* that the Cook-Maxton manifesto had not damaged relations within the ILP as it brushed off the affair as something of a lover's tiff between Maxton and Dollan. Indeed, the Scottish ILP Conference, held in January 1929 and presided over by Dollan, was presented by the *New Leader* as one of equanimity rather than one of strife, with Dollan using his presidential speech to call for unity to ensure the success of 'Socialism in Our Time' and hoping for the 'avoidance of side shows and stunts in politics'. Indeed, according to the *New Leader*, Dollan argued that

There was never the semblance of a split and it is correct to conclude that the Maxton-Dollan association of 20 years was restored. At least that that was the impression conveyed to Kirkwood, who is 'commander-in-chief of the conciliation department of the ILP in Scotland. Let bygones be bygones.'³⁴

Given the circumstances, this was indeed an incredulous statement and, as will become clear, it is evident that deep divisions within the Party remained into the 1930s and would reappear, even more deeply, over the disaffiliation crisis. A semblance of order was re-established when Maxton was re-elected chairman at the 1929 ILP Annual conference, by 284 votes against 39 for Shinwell and 38 for Dollan, and remained chairman until 1931. Maxton was later to resume that role again from 1934 until 1939, but he was surviving on his reputation as a revered socialist agitator in a show of obeisance.³⁵

Maxton's flirtation into new party politics were partly forgiven, if not forgotten. However, the Annual ILP Conference of 1929 was again given over to discussing the future of both Maxton and the ILP. Buxton felt that the ILP should become an educational body 'making Socialists', whilst others felt that Maxton should leave Parliament and become a 'John the Baptist' for the ILP.³⁶ The Conference did not accept these possibilities and roles, and an amendment to terminate its membership of the Labour Party Parliamentary Group was defeated.³⁷ Instead, a resolution from the London Central Branch was accepted, ensuring that ILP MPs with a proven

record of ILP membership should 'in general' accept ILP policy in the House of Commons. Given that there were 160 ILP MPs in the House of Commons, mostly nominal ILPers rather than active ILPers, this meant that the 18 who accepted this resolution, which was less than the 39 sponsored MPs who had been returned in 1928, were actually to be members of the ILP Parliamentary Group.³⁸ This meant that the ILP was to remain a party within a party, giving its MPs approval to ignore the orders of the PLP if they wished, thus widening both the schism with the Labour Party and that within its own ranks. The formation of a second minority Labour government in June 1929 widened the rift between the ILP and the Labour Party.

The second Labour government, June 1929 to August 1931

A second Labour government was formed in June 1929. It was a minority government of 291 Labour MPs, 37 of whom were sponsored by the ILP. The number of ILP MPs had fallen from the 46 of 1923, though it was up on the 24 of 1924, which had increased to 28 as a result of four parliamentary by-election results in Scotland between 1924 and 1929. Of the 37 MPs, 17 were from Scotland, where the Labour Party had only secured seven seats. Being in a minority government, and thus limited in its ability to pass major socialist legislation, the second Labour government adopted a gradualist approach to introducing socialism. Its policies seemed to be little more than minor amendments to those of the Conservative Government of Stanley Baldwin, which it replaced. The ILP was not impressed with a repeat performance of 1924, and from the start Maxton and Wheatley criticised the King's Speech of the new Labour government.

The main challenge was to the government policy on unemployment, although Maxton could not guarantee the support he would get from the ILP Parliamentary Group, which consisted of 37 sponsored ILP MPs and 123 non-sponsored card-carrying members, who were often trade unionists as well as Labour MPs who were inclined to criticise the government but not to challenge it – although that was partly solved when the Parliamentary Group became a faithfully supported party policy. The initial complaint of Jowett, Maxton and Wheatley was that only an extra £12 million per year was being made available for the unemployed and that a much higher level of expenditures was required. Underpinning this perceived lack of commitment to dealing with the unemployed was the issue of unemployment insurance. Margaret Bondfield, the new Minister of Labour and the first woman to ever sit in the British Cabinet, set up the Morris Committee to examine and repeal the 'not genuinely seeking work' provision of the existing legislation which was used to disqualify claimants for unemployment benefits. Arthur Hayday, MP, one of the two Labour representatives on the Committee, favoured no disqualification unless the claimant definitely refused suitable employment, but the Morris Committee decided that disqualification would occur where there was suitable employment and the claimant did not prove 'reasonable efforts to obtain such work'.³⁹ This meant that some benefits could be denied to the unemployed and that payments could be denied to the newly unemployed for the first six days.⁴⁰

Maxton and Wheatley were opposed to these recommendations that were taken up in the government's Unemployment Bill of 1929, and called a special meeting of the ILP Parliamentary Group, attended by 30 MPs who created a set of the 'ILP Minimum' policies on 21 October 1929. However, when a meeting of about 80 ILP MPs, both the sponsored and unsponsored, was held on 28 October 1929, Maxton's opposition to the Labour government was defeated by 41 to 14. Amendments were not to be allowed, a decision which Maxton opposed, and 66 ILP MPs went on to sign a declaration supporting the government.⁴¹ Following this, at a meeting of the full Parliamentary Group on the morning of 19 November 1929, Shinwell got the ILP MPs to support the government's Bill.⁴² William Leach, ILP MP for Bradford Central, had already helped to collect the signatures. However, at the following meeting on 23 November, Maxton refused to accept the decision since the practice of the group had always been 'to reach the greatest measure of common agreement but it had never been held that the Group decisions bound every member'.⁴³

Despite Leach presenting his case for supporting the Labour government in the *New Leader*, arguing the need for Labour unity for a Labour government, Maxton persisted with his attack upon the Unemployment Bill.⁴⁴ Brockway was to later reflect that, for Maxton and the ILP critics of the Labour government, 'This was the first step in the course which led to the disaffiliation of the ILP from the Labour Party'.⁴⁵ In the end, the government proposals were amended and 'dole', or transitional payments for those without automatic benefits who had made contributions to the Unemployment Fund, was made easier to obtain. However, this opposition to the unemployment policies both signalled the difficulties that were to emerge between the ILP and the second Labour government and to the serious tensions that existed within the ILP between its factions within its Parliamentary Group and throughout the rank and file in the Party.⁴⁶

Maxton, having failed to gain support amongst ILP MPs for his attack upon the Labour government, succeeded in getting the NAC to support his stance on the Insurance Bill, only three members voting against him. Dollan countered by stating that Maxton was not considered to be the best leader by those on Clydeside and in Scotland as a whole. What then ensued was a battle between the NAC, who supported the Maxton 'rebels', and many other members of the ILP and the majority of the Parliamentary group. It was a battle in which Maxton gained the support of the NAC and the ILP Conference, in both 1929 and 1930, through the resolutions to commit ILP MPs to ILP policy; victories which gave him some power over the ILP MPs who had already rejected his policy of opposition to the Labour government/ Maxton and 'the rebels' won this battle, but Dollan was right in his estimation of the limited support for Maxton. Indeed, the Scottish Divisional Conference in 1930, briefly dominated by Dollan, narrowly defeated the Maxton-Wheatley policy of opposition to the Labour government by 103 votes to 94, and Dollan attacked the very idea of the formation of the Left Group in the House of Commons to attack the Labour government on unemployment and other areas where he felt that it was failing. The *New Leader*, in reporting upon this event, concluded that this undermined the myth that Scotland was the 'great stronghold

of the rebel Left'.⁴⁷ That was perhaps premature, and even Shinwell, who was often in conflict with Maxton, admitted that the Maxton line might prevail and that the ILP might 'have to make a future stand against the Labour Party'.⁴⁸

By January 1930, support for Maxton came largely from outside Scotland. The Welsh Division endorsed the Maxton/rebel position by 47 votes to 37, which led Mort, its NAC Divisional representative, to resign on the spot. The Midlands' Divisional Conference accepted the NAC position without opposition, though it rejected the call for disaffiliation from the Labour Party. The Yorkshire Divisional Conference also supported 'the rebels', without dissent, as advised by Jowett.⁴⁹ However, the Keighley ILP recognised the problem of the relations between the ILP and the Labour Party 'as bristling with difficulties' and hoped to organise a joint conference to maintain some type of local unity.⁵⁰

The Southern Divisional Conference also supported Maxton and 'the 'rebels'. The NAC also gave its overwhelming support to Maxton and Wheatley at the 1930 ILP Conference, where that support was confirmed by a vote of 367 to 53. Maxton's command of the NAC remained, though it began to falter with the death of John Wheatley, who had exerted something of a restraining influence on Maxton in May 1930. This meant two things. First, the NAC of the ILP and the ILP Conference were in conflict with the Parliamentary Group of its own MPs, both sponsored and unsponsored. Its MPs, if they followed the Party directives, would ignore the Labour Party official whips and take their instructions solely from the ILP. Secondly, the ILP was now in a state of almost permanent opposition to the Labour Party. At the House of Commons 'Question Time', they questioned the Labour Minister just as relentlessly as they had done at their Tory predecessors; their amendments to the government's proposals became a regular feature of the Order Paper. In every debate it was their speeches which were felt, by some, to be the most deadly and viperish in exposing the government's weakness and timidity.⁵¹

The NAC hoped to find a compromise with the Labour Party, but ILP parliamentary candidates were by now not being selected by local Labour Party constituencies because of their refusal to accept the Standing Orders (1929) of the Labour Party. In order to defend that position the ILP had in fact taken a decision at its 1930 Easter Conference (held at Birmingham) to reconstruct its Parliamentary group on a resolution on the 'basis of acceptance of the policy of the ILP' as agreed at its annual conferences and the NAC.⁵² It was carried by a vote of seven to one, after a vigorous debate in which Dollan expressed the view that such an action would fragment socialism and halt the socialist advance.⁵³ This meant that the ILP was intending to act as a party within a party, but discussions took place and appeared to resolve the differences between the ILP and the Labour Party on 25 July 1930. However, on 30 July 1930, the ILP, without warning the Labour Party, re-issued its request for ILP MPs to pledge themselves to the policies of the ILP. This led to a spate of meetings and correspondence between the ILP and the Labour Party in July and August 1930. The discussions went into November and December, when the ILP attempted to force potential ILP MPs to commit themselves to a pledge of loyalty to the ILP.⁵⁴ Indeed, it was in a debate

in mid-November 1930 that Manny Shinwell, who opposed Maxton's constant attack upon the Labour government, stated that Maxton had said at a meeting of the ILP Parliamentary Group that 'one test of loyalty to the ILP was to vote against the Government a few times in a session'.⁵⁵ Alongside this was the demand of the NEC of the Labour Party and the PLP that the revised Standing Orders of 1929 should be accepted, the failure of which led to Tom Irwin's parliamentary campaign in East Renfrew in November 1930 being supported only by the ILP.⁵⁶ The fact is that these types of conflicts between the ILP's demand for the loyalty of its members and the Labour Party/PLP demand for the loyalty of the ILP MPs, rumbled on throughout the entire period of the second Labour government. The debate over Standing Orders might have heated up in the summer months of 1932, but it was an ever-present issue in 1930 and 1931.

Crucial to the decision of the ILP not to compromise on their assumed rights of independence of action was the political record of the second Labour government, which offered proof positive to some sections of the ILP of the failure of socialist 'gradualism' and spurred them along the route to more revolutionary policies. At the ILP's Annual Easter Conference in 1931, the London and the Midland branches, and a few others, decided to 'reject with disdain the quack remedies of the Labour Government, Mr. Lloyd George and Oswald Mosley'.⁵⁷ The collapse of the second Labour government in August 1931 amplified such criticism as the ILP detached itself from the failure of socialist gradualism. Indeed, within a month, Brockway had written the pamphlet, *The ILP and the Crisis*, which highlighted the way in which the Labour government had been the 'Brazen Servants of Capitalism', dominated by the financiers in London, New York and Paris, the banks and the Governor of the Bank of England, Sir Montague Norman, whom he regarded as the true Prime Minister of the Labour government.⁵⁸ The Birmingham Federation also sent a statement to the Annual ILP Easter Conference at Blackpool in March 1932, suggesting that the real problem was not one of Standing Orders but of 'a fundamental divergence on Socialist Policy which makes it impossible for us to continue any formal allegiances to the Labour Party'; and declared its intentions to run Independent socialist candidates in the municipal elections in November for 'the true policy of gradualism or MacDonaldism, can no longer be hidden'.⁵⁹ Indeed, it claimed that the causes of Henderson, Lansbury, Clynes and other Labour leaders were nothing but Toryism and that 'They were deaf to the cries of the tortured prisoners of Meerut, they voted for armaments, they promoted Imperialism in India, China, Egypt, and Palestine'. In the final analysis the Federation felt 'the Labour Party acts not to defend the poor, but to defend the rich from the just causes of the poor'. Fenner Brockway was more circumspect, though equally blunt, when he spoke to the 1932 Easter Annual Conference, stating that

If the experience of a Labour Government had filled the minds of only the working class section of the electorate with a positive faith and a positive sense of achievement they would be immune to all the power and scorn of the Capitalist Parties. It was the failure of the Labour Government during these months

of office which made the minds of the working class in a negative condition which easily responded to the negative phrases and fears during the three weeks of the election.⁶⁰

To some sections of the ILP the second Labour government was a missed opportunity and the introduction of socialism now required a new direction.

Within the ILP those who wished to remain on close terms with the Labour Party saw themselves as increasingly under pressure from Maxton and the ILP leadership. Dollan now saw himself as 'A Rebel Against the Rebels' and contributed a session to the 1930 ILP Summer School under that very title suggesting that ILP MPs should be free to follow the PLP directives. Shinwell supported him in this view since ILP MPs were being forced to give assurances that they were advocating for the policies of the ILP within the Labour Party. He asked 'Am I to assume that if the ILP minority can flout the Parliamentary Labour Party, then the minority of the ILP can flout? . . . Surely, the 'right to flout' was not a monopoly of the ILP Group'.⁶¹ Paton, the Secretary of the ILP and a supporter of Maxton, responded by suggesting that decisions that had been reached by the ILP would be enforced.⁶² The message was clear; they must vote on how the NAC and the Conference directed and ignored the PLP/Labour Party directives if they clashed with those of the ILP. The right of 'flout' was to be one-eyed.

The battle between the NAC and the Conference, on the one hand, and the Parliamentary Group, on the other, went on until Maxton and the NAC decided that only those MPs who accepted NAC and Conference decisions could be members of the Parliamentary Group of the ILP, thus reducing it to a rump. However, it is clear that the ILP members throughout the country remained divided on whether or not to criticise MacDonald's second Labour government. Many remained loyal to the ILP, and one loyalist reflected that 'Wheatley will stop at nothing in his frenzy to bring Mac down'.⁶³ Many others remained loyal to the Labour Party and Labour government. Dollan, as well as a large section of Scottish ILPers, remained loyal to the second Labour government. Indeed, many rank and file members were prepared to acknowledge the difficulties of a minority Labour government. Indeed, one member of the Huddersfield ILP wrote that

Prevented from carrying out a real Socialist programme, through the lack of a Parliamentary majority, the Government has nevertheless made every effort to put some new spirit into capitalist enterprise. A new overseas Trade Development Council has been created and the Trade Mission are to go, or have gone, to South America.⁶⁴

This particular passage hints at acceptance of MacDonald's general assumption that socialism would arise out of the success of capitalism.

Nevertheless, it was Maxton's influence over the Party machine that grew as the NAC statement to the ILP Conference of Easter 1930 revealed. Challenging the Standing Orders of the PLP, it stated:

But the I.L.P. has always been an independent Socialist organisation making its distinctive contribution to Labour Party policy and having its distinctive function within the Party. Whilst the I.L.P. has worked with loyalty to the Labour Party principles, its liberty of action when fundamental Socialist issues are involved has not been questioned. Throughout the period of the war, and on many occasions before and since, I.L.P. members in Parliament, including several members of the present Government, have felt it necessary to vote according to their convictions, even though the majority of the Party took another view.

The suggestion is now made that all Labour members of Parliament and all Labour candidates should undertake never to vote against the Government. It is unreasonable to ask members of the Party to accept without question all the proposals of the Government when those proposals are not themselves subject to the decisions of the Parliamentary Party, and in many instances do not comply with the programme authorised by the Labour Conference.⁶⁵

The ILP was prepared to reprimand the recalcitrant child it had helped produce, as it fledged, left the nest and grew into the party of government. Indeed, Maxton, as Chairman at the 1930 ILP Conference, informed his audience that despite the Labour Party declaring itself to be socialist in 1918, the ILP, after a lengthy debate, concluded in the early 1920s that 'our work was not nearly finished and that we should apply our minds to bringing Socialism in to the political and social affairs of this nation as an objective of speedy realisation'.⁶⁶ He demanded a more revolutionary approach to socialism.⁶⁷

Therefore, the ILP continued to oppose the legislation of the Labour government. It sought to amend the Unemployment Insurance Bill of 1929, and also to change the Coal Mines Bill of 1930, in order to introduce a minimum wage. In October 1930, Jowett moved an amendment to the King's Speech explaining that 'Socialism is the official policy of the Labour Party and it was not recognised in the King's Speech'.⁶⁸ The ILP also opposed local interference in the maintenance allowances in the Education Bill and also sought the extension of rights during the discussion of the legislation on National Health Insurance between December 1930 and January 1931. It opposed all army, navy and air force estimates as a matter of principle, and demanded an alternative vote be included in the Representation of the People's Bill.⁶⁹

At the Labour Party annual conference held at Llandudno in October 1930, Maxton moved what was effectively a vote of censure on the Labour government, but it was defeated by 1,800,000 votes to 330,000.⁷⁰ MacDonald, by popular acclaim, made a brilliant speech in defending the government's performance on public works for the unemployed. However, Oswald Mosley's Memorandum, advocating expansionist economic measures, was only narrowly defeated, its opponents, including the ILP Parliamentary Group, feeling that though it advocated economic expansionist measures it was not a socialist programme. However, five ILP MPs – W. J. Brown, Dr. Robert Forgan, John McGovern, John Strachey and John Beckett – did support Mosley's radical policies and later signed

the Mosley Manifesto in December 1930, a version of Mosley's Memorandum with the suggestion that the country should also be run by a super-cabinet of five.⁷¹ This was an interim distraction, although all except McGovern joined Mosley's New Party, and all the others, except Strachey, joined the British Union of Fascists.

The ILP approach to the Labour government's economic and social policies remained hostile and was only tempered when it felt that Conservative policies would have been worse. This was evident when Brockway spoke against the Conservative Motion of Censure of 16 April 1931, a speech later published under the title, *A Socialist Plan for Unemployment*. The Conservative motion of censure was based upon the failure of Labour's unemployment policy, but the ILP amendment to this outlined a policy for unemployment based upon the 'Socialism in Our Time' programme and extending credits to Russia in the areas of shipbuilding and engineering. The ILP amendment arose because it was felt that 'the Conservative Party are more the political enemies of the unemployed than any other section'.⁷² Brockway dismissed the Conservative policies on unemployment as attempts to further worsen the condition of the unemployed by reducing 'dole' and driving the long-term unemployed to despair by separating those unemployed for more than a year from the rest of the unemployed. He attacked the Conservative penchant for tariffs, which he saw as equally unsatisfactory as free trade. Reflecting upon the ILP position, he criticised the failure of the Labour government to tackle unemployment through socialist measures, regretted its acceptance of the need to increase productivity before unemployment could be properly tackled and reminded the government that whilst the ILP group would vote against the Conservative censure amendment, that 'if the Government are to secure our support, their unemployment policy must be based upon Socialist principles'.⁷³ Ultimately, that meant to the ILP a minimum standard of living, nationalisation and national planning, and the setting up of import and export boards to control imports and exports. The PLP responded to the ILP by pressing further to invoke the Standing Orders (1929), which insisted that no Labour MP could vote in Parliament against a PLP decision, though it allowed abstention on a matter of conscience. Jowett replied by suggesting that MPs owed allegiance to their electors and to party conference decisions and should not have their views interfered with by the Standing Orders of their party.⁷⁴ The ILP and the Labour Party corresponded in order to try to resolve their differences. Maxton wrote to Henderson on 30 December 1930, accepting the Labour Party constitution but complaining of the restrictive nature of the present rules.⁷⁵ Subsequent correspondence changed little, and on 6 July 1931 Paton's letter to Henderson complained that Standing Orders might prevent ILP MPs from honouring the decisions of the Labour Party and may prevent him from introducing the 'Socialist principles he professes'.⁷⁶

It was as this very moment that the Anomalies Bill, the last great conflict between the ILP and the second Labour government, was fomenting. Debated in June and July 1931, when enacted it deprived 200,000 insured married women of the right to unemployment benefits not simply because they were unemployed but because they were married to employed husbands and working in areas where there was

no work and where they were deemed as not 'genuinely seeking work'.⁷⁷ This blatantly discriminatory piece of legislation did not apply to men, married or single, or single women, who had also paid their contributions but were seeking work in similar areas where there was no work to be had. The Bill was introduced by Margaret Bondfield, the Minister of Labour, and supported by Dr. Marion Phillips, MP for Sunderland and secretary and Chief Woman Organiser of the Women's Section of the Labour Party.⁷⁸ Although the second reading was carried overwhelmingly by 231 votes to 19, with about 60 per cent of MPs not voting, it was a mixture of ILP MPs and Conservatives who opposed this measure, which was designed to save a mere £5 million for the Treasury. George Buchanan, Maxton and Brockway headed a small group of about a dozen ILP 'rebel' MPs, which also included Jowett, Jennie Lee and J. F. Horrabin, who opposed the Bill. Brockway asked 'Why do women who claim their legal rights become spongers?' adding that 'The working women who is married if she has a legal right to benefit has the right to get it without being blackballed and libelled'.⁷⁹ He also complained of the 'grave abuses that the unemployed suffer'.⁸⁰ As a result of their opposition, there was an all-night session in which they forced 32 divisions on the Bill. However, the Anomalies Bill was passed and Brockway considered it to be the overwhelming justification for the ILP's willingness to flout Labour's new Standing Orders, and the subject of an ILP pamphlet.⁸¹ At the subsequent ILP Annual Conference at Blackpool in 1932, he reflected that this Bill was one of the worst examples of the failure of the second Labour government:

The Labour Government became responsible for this cruel measure as a result of one of the meanest capitalist agitations this country has ever witnessed. It was in literal truth an agitation to rob the pittance of the unemployed in order to safeguard the luxury incomes of rich from increased taxation. The same agitation compelled the representatives of the Labour government to accept the principles of the Means Test on the Parliamentary Committee and to agree the May Committee which resulted in the cut in unemployment benefit rates, the wages of public workers, the social services – which the National Government has since imposed.⁸²

Throughout the second Labour government, it was clear that the ILP had been critical of many of Labour's policies. Even when it supported the government against a motion of no confidence, or censure, on 1 April 1931, Brockway made it clear that the ILP support was because it feared Conservative plans for the unemployed more. Brockway added that he also hoped that the government would introduce an unemployment policy based upon 'Socialist principles' and that it would gain the support of the back-benchers.⁸³ The clear implication was that the ILP's political support was conditional and there was clear frustration at the failure of the second Labour government to do more for the working classes and the unemployed. Reflecting upon the second Labour Party in January 1932, almost equidistant between the resignation of the second Labour government and disaffiliation, Brockway asserted that apart from the tensions between the ILP and the

Labour Party in the 1920s, 'There was the further shock which followed the futility of the Labour Government of 1929 to 1931'.⁸⁴

Brockway again highlighted the failures of the Labour government at the Easter Conference of the ILP in 1932 when, as Chairman, he had discussed 'The Coming Revolution'.⁸⁵ Here he presented the well-worn argument that the Labour government had failed because it did not press forward with socialist policies, felt that it could have pressed ahead with such measures, ignored parliamentary defeats and hung on to power in order to highlight the need for socialist measures. Instead it flirted with capitalism: 'It meant going from compromise to compromise. It meant that a Government which called itself Labour actually became the instrument of making the condition of the working class worse'.

The political defection of MacDonald in August 1931, his formation of a National Government and the calling of a general election in October 1931 brought matters to a head. The Labour Party further demanded that all its parliamentary candidates should sign a document accepting the revised Standing Orders (1929). As a result, 19 ILP candidates refused to sign and were thus not endorsed by the Labour Party for the 1931 general election.⁸⁶ Matters were not helped by the fact that the Labour Party Conference of October 1931 did not accept that the ILP could act as the organised socialist conscience of the Labour Party.

Disaffiliation

The general election defeat of October 1931, and the scale on which it occurred, was a great shock to the ILP and the Labour Party.⁸⁷ MacDonald's National Government had the support of 13 National Labour MPs and 470 Conservatives in a House of Commons of 625 MPs. The Labour Party was down to 52 MPs (normally it is suggested that there were 46 or 47 Labour MPs and five members of the ILP), from 291 in 1929.⁸⁸ The ILP was down from 37 MPs to five. Three of them were from the 19 ILP candidates put forward for the general election – Maxton (Glasgow Bridgeton), R. C. Wallhead (Merthyr) and John McGovern (Glasgow Shettleston) – and they were joined by two successful trade union sponsored candidates, David Kirkwood (Dunbarton Burghs) and George Buchanan (Glasgow Govan), who were also members of the ILP and also declined to accept Standing Orders. These five ILP MPs briefly formed the ILP Group in the new Parliament and were not admitted to the meetings of the PLP. Dr. Salter, though a prominent member of the ILP until disaffiliation, was returned as a Labour MP for Bermondsey since he had signed the Labour Party's Standing Orders.

The result of the general election intensified the ongoing negotiations between the ILP and the Labour Party. After the protracted discussions of 1930 and 1931, Arthur Henderson, of the Labour Party, informed the NAC of the ILP in July 1931 that the ILP MPs would have to accept Standing Orders.⁸⁹ The NAC's predictable reply was to suggest that it would not allow its MPs to accept Standing Orders

which may penalise a member for seeking to give effect to the decisions of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party, may prevent him from honouring

the Socialist principle he professes, and which may restrain him from fulfilling pledges in which he may have entered with his constituents.⁹⁰

However, underpinning this principle was the fact that many of the ILP, Maxton and his supporters more readily than others, believed that the Labour Party and Labour governments were more committed to patching up capitalism than introducing socialism. The Standing Orders debate was seen as more of a consequence than a cause of the split with the Labour Party. It was a debate which continued to pervade relations between the two parties and perpetuated a schism within the ILP.

By this stage, the ILP had fragmented into three main groups. The first, led by Maxton, Wheatley and the Clydesiders, was moving towards disaffiliation alone, with support from some from London, the Southern Counties, East Anglia, Glasgow and the Midlands. The two small divisions of the South-West and East Anglia also supported disaffiliation, though the South-West had only 22 branches and East Anglia had a mere ten branches. In the South-West there was a narrow majority in favour of disaffiliation encouraged by the revolutionary supporter Robert Rawlings of Taunton, and the conference favoured ILP affiliation to the Third International.⁹¹ In East Anglia, the Norwich branch of the ILP, with more than half of the divisional membership, came into conflict with the Labour Party because its candidate, Dorothy Jewson, had not been endorsed as a parliamentary candidate by the Labour Party and met with great hostility from W. R. Smith, the endorsed Labour candidate, in the 1931 general election. In the end, the Division voted 12 to 8 for disaffiliation, eight of the votes in favour coming from the Norwich branch and the others from the Yarmouth branch.⁹² A. W. Pugh, of the Bilston branch, supported disaffiliation at the Birmingham ILP Federation meeting on 4 December 1929, and his branch wrote to Maxton and the *New Leader* supporting the policy of encouraging ILP MPs to vote against the second Labour government on the Unemployment Bill.⁹³ On 5 October 1930 the Bilston branch further debated disaffiliation from the Labour Party when J.W. Pugh put forward a motion for disaffiliation, raised again in the Birmingham Federation of the ILP, and stated that he felt that the Labour government's policy on India was deficient and its failure to apply socialist measures was enough to justify a decision 'to part with a Labour Capitalist and Imperialist Party'.⁹⁴ A. W. Pugh, Secretary of this branch, and A. Pugh, the Chair, supported the motion, which was passed by a vote of four to one. The branch was concerned with the reluctance of the Labour government to consider a 'Living Wage Bill'. The Birmingham Federation's disaffiliation motion of 4 December 1929 was supported by the West Bromwich ILP branch on 8 January 1930 and put to the Midlands Conference at Leicester on 28 and 29 January 1930 to the effect 'That the Labour Party having now become in theory and in practice both Capitalist and Imperialist it is now necessary for the Independent Labour Party to cease affiliation to it'.⁹⁵ *Labour's Northern Voice* supported their calls for disaffiliation as did E. J. Sandham and the Lancashire ILPers.⁹⁶

The second group was the London-based Revolutionary Policy Committee (RPC), formed in 1930 mainly by Marxists within the ILP. It worked with his

Poplar branch of the ILP and supported the ideas outlined in Dr. Carl Knight Cullen's, *Memorandum on the present political and economic situation in the ILP*. This contemplated the collapse of capitalism and the view that there was now a clear need for a revolutionary policy and the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.⁹⁷ It asked whether or not 'democracy can be won over to Socialism' since it was weighted in favour capitalism.⁹⁸ It also called for the sweeping away of the capitalist state for a socialist one, ranted against the obvious 'failure of the [second] Labour Government to patch up capitalism', asserting that 'Industrial upheaval or war must be made the opportunity for smashing capitalism. Dictatorship will be necessary until the stabilisation of the power of the workers',⁹⁹ and maintaining that a revolutionary situation was 'more likely to come in the form of an industrial upheaval resulting from waning economic conditions or a general strike'.¹⁰⁰ The Memorandum emphasised that it did not feel that the ILP was redundant to political needs and added that 'We believe that the communist party tends to suffer from the "infantile disorder of Communism" which Lenin found an embarrassment in his guidance of the movement in Russia'.¹⁰¹ Cullen, a London lawyer, became the leader of the RPC on 28 March 1932, leading the Marxists within the ILP.¹⁰² The Poplar branch's 'March programme' pressed for disaffiliation, and worked in line with the RPC and Jack Gaster's Marleybone ILP, supported by the Clapham branch, to effect disaffiliation and a possible link with the communists.

The third group, led by Patrick Dollan of Scotland, Salter of London, Leach Bradford and Frank Wise and supported by many members of the ILP in those divisions, formed the basis of a pro-affiliation 'Unity' group. The *Bradford Pioneer* summarised the Unity Group position by stating that

The ILP is a spiritual endeavour. It must sow and leave others to reap. ILP members should be attracted to all Labour Groups. . . . Their function and duties are not competitive, but complimentary to the functions of the Labour Group.¹⁰³

Angus Cook Livingstone, of Bo'ness ILP branch in Scotland, particularly endorsed this view at the ILP Easter Conference held at Carlisle in 1929, stating that 'The ILP should not compete with the Labour Party. It should remain critical Socialist Party rather than an electoral body'.¹⁰⁴ It favoured mass unity and an end to petty disputes. Indeed, Salter urged the ILP to accept Standing Orders and wrote scathingly of Maxton and his groups opposition to the Labour Party, arguing that democrats could never accept the notion of a dictatorship of 'a conscious minority'.¹⁰⁵ Wise played down the importance of Standing Orders in the *New Leader* on 1 and 15 January 1932. *Forward*, edited for the Scottish ILP by Emrys Hughes, also strongly opposed any idea of disaffiliation. Also, George Lansbury, one-time ILP stalwart who had just become Labour leader, had little sympathy for disaffiliation, feeling that MacDonald's departure made the Standing Orders even more necessary.¹⁰⁶

By the end of January 1932, it is clear that the ILP was deeply divided on the issue. Five divisional councils rejected disaffiliation with only London and the

South, as well as East Anglia and the South-West supporting it.¹⁰⁷ The Scottish Division had rejected it by 88 to 49, under the influence of Dollan and Kirkwood and despite the appeals of Maxton, Buchanan and McGovern.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, all divisions were split over the issue. Whilst the RCP moved London towards disaffiliation, there was strong opposition from the Golders Green, Leyton branches, and the North West London Federation was in favour of remaining in the Labour Party.¹⁰⁹

The Divisional votes often hid deeper local and personal meaning. In Bradford, the birthplace of the ILP, there were painful differences between Jowett and his one-time acolyte Willie Leach, both of whom had been ILP MPs. Jowett believed that the ILP must be free to defend socialist policies and emphasised the need to fulfil pledges that 'are in conformity with the Labour Party Conference decisions and, or with, the Labour Party's own election programme'.¹¹⁰ Rejecting Standing Orders, he stated that 'The answer to those who demand that it must surrender the freedom of its MPs pledges honestly made in accordance with the principles advocated officially for the Labour Party for election purposes is – NO, NO, NEVER'.¹¹¹ In contrast, Leach blamed the ILP for threatening the whole future of the Labour movement by its criticism of the second Labour government and by 'its continuous assertion of Labour untrustworthiness, and yapping at the heels of the present leaders'.¹¹² He felt that there was now more need than ever for unity and that the Standing Orders were flexible. The Bradford ILP clearly suffered divided loyalties but, persuaded by Jowett, favoured disaffiliation by 112 votes to 86. Leach accepted that the local branch would vote against him but felt that only a small part of the branch membership would remain with it and 'It will be regarded as a freak party'.¹¹³ Throughout the rest of the Yorkshire district there was a mood of general opposition to disaffiliation. The Keighley ILP voted, by 17 to 6, in favour of its representative at the Bradford Special Conference, Councillor William Smith voting for affiliation.¹¹⁴

In Leeds, for instance, John Arnott called for the Labour Party to avoid the defection in the *Leeds Citizen*, the local paper of the Labour Party. He argued, that before the decision was taken, to John Arnott, that 'If the ILP is dissatisfied with the Labour Party it will not improve it by committing suicide in a passion of indignation'.¹¹⁵

As the Annual ILP Easter Conference at Blackpool loomed in March 1932, John Paton, the Secretary of the ILP, called for unity. It was a futile request, especially as the Parliamentary Group revealed that there had been no progress in negotiations between Paton and J. S. Middleton, Assistant General Secretary of the Labour Party.¹¹⁶ Cullen and Paton, supported by Poplar and 13 other ILP branches, argued for disaffiliation. Indeed, the Poplar branch, influenced by Cullen, felt that continued discussion was 'not in line with that desired by the Poplar branch'.¹¹⁷ C. G. Garton of Rugby and the Midlands Division spoke in favour of conditional affiliation. Dollan, Kirkwood and Wise argued in favour of unconditional affiliation.¹¹⁸ Dollan disparagingly suggested that it was not the industrial areas but the 'deserts of the far South-West' that favoured disaffiliation.¹¹⁹ Wise prophetically reflected that 'Disaffiliation meant inevitable conflict and they

would be out of contact with the mass of trade unions and Labour Party', adding that 'They and the whole Labour movement were going to spend their years in futile conflict'.¹²⁰

Nevertheless, voting saw the two extremes of unconditional affiliation and disaffiliation rejected at ILP's Easter Conference of 1932 by 214 votes to 98 and 183 to 144 votes, respectively. The Lancashire, North-East, Yorkshire and Welsh Divisions were supportive of disaffiliation, although there was a mixture of opinion, whilst the other divisions were more clearly for remaining or a conditional affiliation, the London and Southern Division having voted 33 to 10 in favour of affiliation in its January Conference.¹²¹ In the end, the Blackpool Conference opted for the compromise of conditional affiliation, the 'Rugby resolution', by 250 votes to 53, and the re-opening of negotiations with Labour although it had been informed that there was little chance that the Labour Party would change its mind.¹²² As Cohen suggests, this was simply delaying the inevitable. Nevertheless, the NAC was instructed to send ILP representatives to meet with the Labour Party representatives again to 'reconcile the differences at present existing'.¹²³ It is thus perhaps not surprising that Cohen sees the Blackpool conference as the pivotal moment.¹²⁴

In the immediate aftermath of this decision, Brailsford campaigned to remain and Dollan hoped for a positive outcome to the negotiations, condemning Maxton, McGovern and the Glasgow and West of Scotland Disaffiliation Committee as 'the advocates of working class disunion'.¹²⁵ But matters became embroiled in emotions as it became clear that J. S. Middleton, the Labour Party's Assistant General Secretary, confirmed that the ILP would have to accept Standing Orders (1929) and as the ILP complained at the poor treatment of its four delegates – Dorothy Jewson, Dora Russell, Anne Hambley and Hilda Lane – when they attended the Women's Conference, as well as the support and applause given to Margaret Bondfield, who had been the Minister of Labour at the time of the passing of the Anomalies Bill, which challenged the right of married women to receive unemployment benefits.¹²⁶ At the other extreme, some ILP members were so alienated by the prospect of continued affiliation that they left the ILP for the CPGB, the most obvious being J. Corbett of the West Bromwich ILP branch, whose action was celebrated in the *Daily Worker* of 4 July 1932.

The predictable round of assertions and recriminations dominated the ILP and the Labour press. On the one hand, the anti-disaffiliationists suggested that the Standing Orders (1929) were no real threat to ILP freedom of expression and that Labour and working-class unity were vital, whilst the disaffiliationists pointed to the past records of the Labour Party and the Labour governments and the failures of gradualism. A potent influence in this interregnum debate was the pamphlet written by Jowett. In *The ILP Says No*, he trailed the history of the ILP, noting the move towards silencing dissent in recent years and emphasising the 'Bradford resolution' which committed the ILP MPs voting in accordance with the principles 'for which the Party stands', and that that remained the ILP's official policy.¹²⁷ This seemed to work hand in hand with the new 'revolutionary policy' that was to emerge as its driving policy in the 1930s, the constitution to which John Paton felt would have to be 'Marxist' in tone.¹²⁸

This clamour of debate provided the context of the meeting of ILP and PLP representatives in the House of Commons on 13 May 1932, and it was made clear by Brockway and Paton that the 'March Resolution' of the ILP Conference made it impossible for the ILP MPs to re-join the PLP. Paton had a Blackpool Conference resolution read out: 'This conference reaffirms the position of the ILP that, whilst not desiring to disaffiliate from the Labour Party, it realises that its affiliation can only be continued if a satisfactory revision of Standing Orders be obtained'.¹²⁹ The PLP representatives immediately rejected the suggestion, but Brockway hoped for further discussions and on 22 June found that the NEC of the Labour Party resolved that the Standing Orders (1929) could only be constitutionally altered through ILP MPs joining the PLP.¹³⁰ The NAC had already anticipated this impasse, for on 4 June the NAC advised the holding of a Special Conference of the ILP to discuss disaffiliation from the Labour Party, with only Dollan voting against the decision.¹³¹ The refusal of the Labour Party to negotiate on the matter means that this conference would simply be about disaffiliation. Attention now switched to Jowett Hall, Bradford, where the meeting would be held on 30 July 1932.

On the eve of the Conference there were last-minute appeals for the ILP to remain affiliated to the Labour Party.¹³² Leach was strongly opposed to disaffiliation and campaigned against it fervently in the *Bradford Pioneer* throughout July 1932, where he wrote articles complaining that the ILP was weakening the whole movement as it had the second Labour government, 'by its continuous assertion of Labour untrustworthiness, and yapping at the heels of the present leaders'.¹³³ On 7 July 1932 he suggested that there were disappointed vanities at work within some sections of the ILP and that MacDonald and Co. have gone East, so the disaffiliationists would go West. All the fruits of ill will, antagonism and open war are bound to follow in both cases'.¹³⁴ On 29 July 1932, on the eve of the Conference, he published an Open Letter imploring delegates not to vote for disaffiliation and stating that 'The ILP was born in Bradford. Have you come to bury it?' David Kirkwood also issued his declaration, 'Why I Refuse to Leave the Labour Party', in *Forward*.

The Bradford Special Conference opened at 3 pm on 30 July 1932 and moved immediately to the issue of disaffiliation. Dollan challenged the legitimacy of any vote by pointing out that there should be 700 delegates with 1,000 votes present instead of 300 delegates with 400 votes (there had been only 250 delegates and 327 votes at Blackpool) and that 'It was therefore altogether impossible to get a representative judgement which so vitally affected the whole future'.¹³⁵ The major debate took place on the evening of Saturday 30 July when Kirkwood, John Beckett and Dollan advocated continued affiliation, though Dollan feared that there was a generational impact within the ILP: 'The young people seemed to have a disposition towards disaffiliation due, he thought, to the lack of experience and knowledge'. He believed that the vote would represent only 25 per cent of the party, though another estimate suggested 37 per cent of the party.¹³⁶ George Buchanan's riposte for the disaffiliationists was that 'They [the ILP] had no right to be affiliated to a Party neither working-class nor Socialist'.¹³⁷ In advocating

disaffiliation, Maxton did not see himself taking the ILP into political oblivion: 'There was no wilderness where there were 3,000,000 unemployed and where there were millions in poverty'.¹³⁸ Shortly afterwards the historic vote for disaffiliation was passed by 241 votes to 142.¹³⁹ At 9.30 pm that night, the delegates rose spontaneously and sang 'The Internationale' in unison though one account suggests that 'the singing had more solemnity about it than enthusiasm as the figures of the vote imposed a severe restraint on jubilation'.¹⁴⁰

On the following day, 31 July, the Special Conference reflected upon its rebellion against Standing Orders, its new and rather nebulous revolutionary policy which replaced 'Socialism in Our Time' and the revolutionary spirit it presented. It particularly focused upon the practical decisions of ILP members not paying the trade union levy and withdrawing from membership of the Cooperative Party and that its own constitution, which it was argued now stood for the 'complete overthrow of the economic, political and social organisation of the Capitalist State and its replacement by a Socialist Commonwealth'.¹⁴¹ There were immediate repercussions.

Dollan and Wise withdrew on the second day of the conference, and Wise resigned from the NAC, Brockway reading his letter from the chair in which he argued that 'secession from the Labour Party. . . Seems to be an act of treachery to the Labour Movement and of suicide for the ILP'.¹⁴² There was subsequently a debate about whether or not Wise would attend the ILP Summer School to speak, which he did.

In the wake of the decision, Dollan repeated his claim that the Bradford Conference was not representative of the views of the movement as a whole in his article, 'Did the Bradford Conference Really Represent the ILP?', in *Forward*, doubting whether even a third of the 250 Scottish branches had been represented and stating that half the Lancashire branches were opposed to disaffiliation.¹⁴³ The *New Leader* later countered with many examples of support for the Bradford decision and recorded the expulsion of Dollan and 15 other Scottish members for 'organising openly to wreck the ILP'.¹⁴⁴ The reporting of this action led the London Division to ask for the expulsion of ten members, including Brailsford, Wise and Creech Jones, for 'actively opposing' the Bradford decision.

The *New Leader* denied that there were significant resignations and expulsions from the ILP as a result of disaffiliation, but this was simply not true, as strongly evidenced by the subsequent rapid decline of the ILP in the 1930s. Indeed, many members were to defect from the ILP between 1932 and 1935, unable and unwilling to leave Labour, to accept the new revolutionary policy or to reject a connection with communism. In the wake of disaffiliation only one of the 32 members of the Labour Group on the Bradford Council left the Labour Party; the Bramley ILP agreed to remain with the Labour Party, and on 24 September 1932 a Yorkshire Conference of affiliated ILPers was held to decide its future relations with the Labour Party.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, John Aplin wrote to Middleton, of the Labour Party, seeking to find out whether something could be arranged at this moment when the 'world was in crisis'.¹⁴⁶ Patrick Dollan, in control of a substantial proportion of the Glasgow ILP, formed the Scottish Socialist Party, which claimed 107 ILP branches and about 50 per cent of the Glasgow ILP membership, in an attempt to remain loyal to the Labour Party.¹⁴⁷ Others agreed with the sentiments, and many

others were to leave in 1934 and 1935, unable to accept various aspects of the new revolutionary policy of the ILP. A rather sad editorial in the *Bradford Pioneer*, written by Frank Betts, concurred with the fears of those who felt that the ILP would now go into political oblivion.

The Independent Labour Party now joins the numerous small groups engaged in useless and obscure warfare against the organised Labour army. Along with the Communist Party, the Socialist Party of Great Britain and other eccentric groups quite unknown to the general public, the total sterility of a once great and influential party seems assured.¹⁴⁸

This was supported by the Labour Party Conference at which was stated, on 3 October 1932, that

The present leaders of the Independent Labour Party by weakening the Party and divorcing it from the larger Movement, by fomenting discord, by playing into the hands of our political opponents, have chosen course that cannot advance the cause of Socialism.¹⁴⁹

As a result, it was argued that the Independent Labour Party was now committed to factionalism and sterility.

In reply, in August 1932, Brockway wrote an article on 'Why the ILP left the Labour Party'. In it he stressed emphatically that 'We have heard much of loyalty. It was not that the ILP which was guilty of disloyalty. It was the Labour government'.¹⁵⁰ He reiterated that the ILP had always maintained its freedom of action in the House of Commons, whilst remaining loyal to the socialist decisions of Labour Party conferences, but explained how it had become disenchanted by 'gradualism' of the Labour Party and the policies of the second Labour government. To him, and many members of the ILP, the Labour government had abandoned its responsibility to introduce socialism. To Brockway it was the 'gradualism' of the Labour Party and the capitalism of the Labour government that had led to the ILP's disaffiliation, and he anticipated a new more revolutionary approach to socialism, whilst reminding his readers that it was going to be one developed by the ILP in a British context, not one adopted by the communist party: 'The rigidity of mind and method of the British Communist Party makes it incapable of appealing to the mass British working class or of adopting policies applicable to the British situation'.¹⁵¹ Shortly afterwards, Brockway re-iterated these views in the pamphlet, *Socialism at the Cross Roads*, which suggested that the decision 'is not a hasty conclusion' and that the ILP was now coupling political democracy with economic democracy.¹⁵² That may have been the attitude of the leading figures of the remaining ILP, as there was no mistaking the problem that disaffiliation caused, and *The Times* accurately reflected that

There is not much standing room between the Labour Party and the communist party and the ILP can only maintain itself by treading on the ground of

one or the other. It may go right or it may go left and in its present state it is more likely to go left; but it is just as likely to be squeezed out.¹⁵³

Few of the ILP branches with surviving records seemed to have put their views about disaffiliation down in a cogent form. The Keighley ILP, which had voted against disaffiliation, is one of the exceptions and remained loyal to the ILP and, in September 1932, resolved that

This branch of the Keighley ILP is overwhelmingly in favour of a united working-class party; it believes that as long as the present standing orders of the Labour Party are enforced [that will not occur]. They are an attempt to restrict ILP members are [or] other working-class organisations from speaking and voting for their socialist principles. Therefore, we are of the opinion that the Bradford Conference took a straight forward and honest course when it decided to leave the Labour Party.¹⁵⁴

Nevertheless, there was an immediate loss of branches and members, up to a third of the membership had left the ILP within a year, and within a few years some of those who had supported disaffiliation recognised their mistake. Jennie Lee viewed disaffiliation 'as the silliest decision of all made by the ILP' because it meant self-imposed exile, whilst even Brockway concluded that it was a 'stupid and disastrous error' and that 'My support of disaffiliation was the greatest political mistake of my life'.¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

What then was the reason for the disaffiliation of the ILP? Was it 'suicide during a fit of insanity', as some contemporaries and historians have argued, or the product of reasoned thought that freed the ILP from the parliamentary allegiance and allowed it to follow its own socialist policies freed from compromise and gradualism? The conflicting opinions are perhaps not so far apart as is often thought. The ILP's disaffiliation from the Labour Party was clearly the culmination of its concern, since the introduction of the Labour Party constitution of 1918, that it no longer had a distinct role to play in Labour politics from that of the Labour Party. Frustration of the gradualism of two Labour governments had driven Brockway, Jowett, Paton, Maxton, Sandham and Wheatley to advocate disaffiliation from the Labour Party. They were confronted by Brailsford, Leach, Salter, Shinwell, Wise and others who increasingly felt that the ILP should be a pressure group within the Labour Party. The Cook-Maxton Manifesto sharply exposed the differences within the ILP, the ultimate failure of the second Labour government and the imposition of the 1929 Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party, demanding loyalty in voting, which were the final straws that allowed what was probably a minority position in the ILP to predominate at the Special Conference at Bradford. There were personal issues and confrontations evident throughout, and particularly at the Bradford Special Conference, but there were also long-held

grievances that drove the momentum for disaffiliation forward. A considered decision or not, the fact is that it led the ILP to stop operating as a viable and meaningful political party and turned it into a diminishing political sect. Nevertheless, the failure of the second Labour government and the necessity of disaffiliation were to be the platform for a flexible and more revolutionary policy that was to be despairingly fought out within the ILP throughout the 1930s.

Notes

- 1 William Knox, *James Maxton*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987, pp. 79–80. This statement was made by Maxton in his chairman's speech at the ILP's Annual Conference, held at Birmingham on 19 April 1930, the Conference occurring between 19–22 April.
- 2 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, pp. 181–4; Keith Laybourn, ““Suicide During a Fit of Insanity” or The Defence of Socialism? The Secession of the Independent Labour Party at a Special Conference at Bradford, July 1932”, *Bradford Antiquary*, 3 (1990), 41–53; Gidon Cohen, ‘The Independent Labour Party, Disaffiliation and Standing Orders’, *History* (2001), 200–21, and *The Failure of a Dream*, chapter 2, ‘The Split’, pp. 15–28.
- 3 Edinburgh Papers, ACCC 7658, Box 24 (1), Arthur Woodburn Papers, clipping from *The Labour Standard*, 14 January 1928.
- 4 ‘Summary of discussion on present position of the Party which took place at the NAC Meeting 9 and 10 June 1928’. Copy in Section 10 of ILP Archives, British Library of Political and Economic Science (BLPES).
- 5 Ross McKibbin, *Parties and the People: England 1914–1951*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- 6 Jon Lawrence, ‘The Transformation of British Public Politics After the First World War’, *Past & Present*, 190.1 (2006), 185–216.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 211–12.
- 8 Marwick, *Clifford Allen*, p. 98.
- 9 *New Leader*, 22 April 1928.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 22 June 1928.
- 11 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 142.
- 12 *Leeds Citizen*, 29 June 1928.
- 13 *Birmingham City ILP Minutes*, 5 July 1928.
- 14 *Keighley ILP Minutes*, 16 July 1928.
- 15 *The Times*, 24 June 1928.
- 16 *The Labour Standard*, 30 June 1928.
- 17 *Daily Herald*, 22 and 25 June 1928.
- 18 *Forward*, 21, 28 July 1928.
- 19 *New Leader*, 29 June 1928.
- 20 Paton, *Left Turn*, pp. 297–8.
- 21 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, pp. 142–3.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 143.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Forward*, 7 July 1928.
- 25 *New Leader*, 6 July 1928.
- 26 *Forward*, 30 June and 14 July 1928; *Labour's Northern Voice*, 3, 4 August and 21 September 1928.
- 27 *Forward*, 14 July 1928; *Labour's Northern Voice*, 3, 24 August 1928, 21 September 1928.
- 28 Arthur James Cook and James Maxton, *Our Case for a Socialist Revival*, London, Workers' Publications Ltd, 1928.

- 29 *New Leader*, 30 November 1928.
- 30 *The Times*, 7 December 1928.
- 31 *Labour's Northern Voice*, 14 December 1928; *New Leader*, 14 December 1928.
- 32 *New Leader*, 7 September 1928; *The Town Crier: Birmingham Labour Weekly*, 14 September 1928, *Socialist Review*, December 1928; *Labour's Northern Voice*, 8 February 1929.
- 33 *New Leader*, 27 September 1920; *Forward*, 2, 16, 23 March 1929.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 18 January 1929.
- 35 *ILP Annual Conference Report 1929*, p. 67, *New Leader*, 16 January 1931.
- 36 *New Leader*, 5 and 12 April 1929.
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 Cohen, Independent Labour Party, Disaffiliation; 209. The 18 were J. Maxton, J. Beckett, Fenner Brockway, W. J. Brown, Robert Forgan, W. Hirst, J. F. Horrabin, F. W. Jowett, David Kirkwood, Jennie Lee, Jack Lees, J. McGovern, E. Sandham, Campbell Stephen, E. R. Strachey, R. C. Wallhead, E. F. Wise, J. Kinley (secretary).
- 39 Robert Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump*, London, Macmillan, 1967, pp. 133–5. It was also published in paperback by Penguin/Pelican in 1970.
- 40 In the *Bradford Pioneer*, 22 November 1930.
- 41 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, pp. 17–18.
- 42 Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 157; NAC Minutes, 7 December 1929.
- 43 *Forward*, 23 November 1929; 'NAC Report', *ILP Annual Conference Report 1930*, pp. 133–5; Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump*, p. 147; and Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 157.
- 44 *Daily Herald*, 20 November 1929; *New Leader*, 29 November and 6 December 1929.
- 45 Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 208.
- 46 Howell, *MacDonald's Party*, pp. 289–91, indicates the extent of the division within the ILP ranks over the action in the House of Commons and the nature of four meetings by the Parliamentary Group of the ILP.
- 47 *New Leader*, 13 January 1930.
- 48 *The Labour Standard*, 18 January 1930.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 31 January 1930.
- 50 Keighley ILP Minutes, Special Meeting, 9 February 1930. Mr. Wardle, of the ILP, felt that it would be very slow work.
- 51 Paton, *Left Turn*, pp. 322–3.
- 52 The Labour Party, *Report of the 32nd Annual Conference 1932*, London, Labour Party, 1932, Appendix VIII, p. 293. The resolution was put forward by Hilda Jennings, an ILP delegate from London.
- 53 Howell, *MacDonald's Party*, pp. 292–3, indicates that the main opposition came from Patrick Dollan, the leading figure in the Glasgow ILP and strong rival to Jimmy Maxton and Tom Stamford.
- 54 Labour Party, *Report, 1931*, pp. 295–6.
- 55 *The Times*, 18 February 1930.
- 56 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 20.
- 57 *The Times*, 7 April 1931.
- 58 Fenner Brockway, *The ILP and the Crisis*, London, ILP, September 1931.
- 59 Birmingham City Minutes, BLPES ILP 9–11. This is a typed statement inserted in the minutes with no date but was probably written in February or March 1932.
- 60 *New Leader*, 1 April 1932.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 21 November 1930.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 14, 21 November 1930.
- 63 Paton, *Left Turn*, p. 291.
- 64 *Huddersfield Citizen*, September 1930.
- 65 James Maxton, *Where the I.L.P. Stands: Presidential Address of J. Maxton*, London, ILP Publications, 1930, p. 14.

- 66 Ibid., p. 4.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Brockway, *Socialism Over Sixty Years*, p. 270.
- 69 *New Leader*, 12 June 1931.
- 70 Labour Party Conference *Report, 1930*, London, Labour Party, 1931.
- 71 W. J. Brown, was MP for West Wolverhampton, joined the New Party in 1931 but left after about a day. Dr. Robert Forgan became MP for West Renfrewshire in 1929 and joined the Mosley's New Party in 1931 and Mosley's British Union of Fascists in 1932. John McGovern won Glasgow Shettleston in a 1930 parliamentary by-election, supported Mosley's economic policies, but remained within the ILP. John Strachey had worked close with Mosley in the mid-1920s on the 'Birmingham Proposals' and *Revolution by Reason*, joined the New Party in 1931 but left after a few months to become a communist before re-joining the Labour Party. John Beckett was MP for Gateshead (1924–1929) and then for Peckham (1929–1931) and became famous for lifting the mace in the House of Commons in 1930 on the suspension of Brockway from the House, before joining the New Party and the BUF.
- 72 A. Fenner Brockway, *A Socialist Plan for Unemployment: Speech by A. Fenner Brockway*, London, ILP, 1931, p. 3.
- 73 Ibid., p. 8.
- 74 Fred Jowett, *The ILP Says No to the Present Standing Orders of the Labour Party*, London, ILP, 1932.
- 75 *Report of the Annual Conference held at Blackpool*, March 1932. Appendix 6, pp. 44–52 give all the correspondence on Standing Orders between the ILP and A. Henderson between December 1930 and July 1931. His letter is on p. 44.
- 76 T. Irwin unsuccessfully contested the Tory seat at East Renfrewshire whilst being unwilling to sign the PLP declaration and selection disputes at Clapham, Kemingrove and Camborne.
- 77 Labour Party Conference *Report, 1930*, London, Labour Party, 1931.
- 78 Marion Goronwy Phillips, *A Woman of Vision: A Life of Marion Phillips*, Wrexham, Bridge Books, 2000.
- 79 *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 254. col. 2129, 8 July 1931.
- 80 Ibid., 254, col. 2189, 8 July 1931.
- 81 George Buchanan and Campbell Stephen, *A Plea for the Report of the Anomalies Act and Abolition of the Means Test*, London, ILP, 1932.
- 82 Ibid., 1 April 1932.
- 83 Brockway, *A Socialist Plan for Unemployment*, p. 8.
- 84 *New Leader*, 15 January 1932.
- 85 Ibid., 1 April 1932.
- 86 Ibid., 23 October 1931.
- 87 Andrew Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991, p. 164.
- 88 Four Clydeside MPs, J. Maxton, J. McGovern, G. Buchanan, and D. Kirkwood, plus R. C. Wallhead who represented Merthyr.
- 89 *New Leader*, 10 July 1931, which quotes a letter dated 23 June 1931.
- 90 Ibid., 10 July 1931, the NAC letter of reply was dated 3 July 1931.
- 91 Ibid., 22 January 1932.
- 92 Division Five Minute Book, 10 January 1932, in BLPES, Coll. Misc. 496.
- 93 Bilston branch minutes, ILP, 9 December 1929, in BLPES, Coll. Misc. 496.
- 94 Ibid., 5 October 1920.
- 95 West Bromwich ILP minute books 1925–1932, General Meeting, 3 September 1929, General Meeting 8 January 1930. These are in the BLPES.
- 96 *Forward*, 7 November, 12 December 1931; *Labour's Northern Voice*, December 1931.
- 97 Ibid., pp. 81–2.

124 *Conflict with the party and government*

- 98 Poplar Branch of the ILP, *Memorandum on the Present Political and Economic Situation of the ILP*, London: Poplar ILP, 1932, p. 4.
- 99 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 100 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 101 *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.
- 102 *Daily Worker*, 31 March 1932.
- 103 *Bradford Pioneer*, 12 March 1926.
- 104 *The Report of the Annual Conference Held at Carlisle, March and April 1929*, London: ILP, 1929, 37th Annual Conference of the ILP, Drill Hall, Carlisle, 30 March 1929, p. 62.
- 105 *New Leader*, 20 November 1931.
- 106 Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, pp. 22–3, 43.
- 107 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 81–2.
- 108 *The Times*, 25 January 1932.
- 109 *Independent Labour Party, Poplar Branch, March Programme*, 1–4; *Final agenda for the divisional conference to be held . . . 23–24 January 1932, ILP London and Southern Divisional Council*, 1932, p. 3.
- 110 *Bradford Pioneer*, 17 June 1932.
- 111 Fenner Brockway, *Socialism Over Sixty Years: The Life of Jowett of Bradford (1864–1944)*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1946.
- 112 *Bradford Pioneer*, 8 January 1932.
- 113 *Ibid.*, 19 February 1932.
- 114 Keighley ILP Minutes, Monthly Meeting, 5 July 1932.
- 115 *Leeds Citizen*, 11 December 1931, 29 January and 1 April 1932.
- 116 *The Report of the Annual Conference held at Blackpool, March 1932*, London, ILP, 1932, p. 48, and the Parliamentary Group Report stage, pp. 22–3.
- 117 Brockway, *Inside the Left*, pp. 38–42; *Forward*, 2 April 1932.
- 118 Paton, *Left Turn*, p. 387.
- 119 *Ibid.*, p. 48; *The Times*, 29 March 1932.
- 120 Paton, *Left Turn*, p. 46.
- 121 *The Times*, 25 January 1932.
- 122 *Ibid.*, 29 March 1932.
- 123 *Forward*, 7 May 1932.
- 124 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 27–8.
- 125 *Forward*, 21 May 1932.
- 126 *Ibid.*, 18 June, 2 July 1932; *New Leader*, 24 June 1932 also contains a detailed report of these events.
- 127 Jowett, *The ILP Says No to the Present Standing Orders of the Labour Party*.
- 128 *New Leader*, 15 July 1932.
- 129 *Ibid.*, 20 May 1932.
- 130 *Labour Party Annual Report*, 1932.
- 131 *New Leader*, 1 July 1932.
- 132 *Bradford Pioneer*, 29 July 1931.
- 133 Brockway, *Inside the Left* (1943), p. 238.
- 134 *Bradford Pioneer*, 8 July 1932.
- 135 *Report of the Special National Conference held at Bradford July 30th–31st*, London, ILP, 1932, pp. 4–5.
- 136 *Ibid.*, p. 18; *The Times*, 1 August 1932.
- 137 *Special National Conference*, p. 18.
- 138 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 139 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 140 *The Times*, 1 August 1932.
- 141 *Special National Conference*, pp. 33–5.

- 142 *New Leader*, 5 August 1932. *The Times*, 6 August 1932, indicates that he made the statement to the ILP Summer School at Caerleon, Wales.
- 143 *Forward*, 6 August 1932.
- 144 *New Leader*, 19, 26 August 1932.
- 145 *Bradford Pioneer*, 5, 12 August, 9 and 30 September 1932; *Leeds Citizen*, 19 August 1932; City of Leeds Labour Party Minutes, 13 October 1932.
- 146 People's History Museum, Labour Study and Archive Centre, Middleton Papers, JSM/ILP/2.
- 147 *Forward*, 27 August, 3 September 1932, quoted in McKinlay and Smyth, 'The End of the "Agitator Workman"', p. 198.
- 148 *Bradford Pioneer*, 5 August 1931.
- 149 Labour Party Conference, 32nd Conference held at De Montefort Hall, Leicester, 3 October 1932, *Report*, p. 157.
- 150 *New Leader*, 5 August 1932.
- 151 *Ibid.*
- 152 Fenner Brockway, *Socialism at the Cross Roads: Why the ILP Left the Labour Party*, London, ILP, 1932, pp. 1, 11.
- 153 *The Times*, 1 August 1932.
- 154 Keighley ILP, Minutes, Monthly Meeting, 13 September 1932.
- 155 Jennie Lee, *My Life with Nye*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1980, pp. 80–1; Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow*, 1977, p. 107.

5 'The ILP flea'

The rapid demise and factionalism of the Independent Labour Party in the early and mid-1930s

Those who supported the disaffiliation of the ILP in 1932 hoped for a new dawn for socialism freed from the gradualist policies and the crabbing and confining influence of the Labour Party. They envisioned a millennial age dawning as capitalism appeared to be collapsing in the wake of the Wall Street Crash of 1929. Not surprisingly, those opposed to disaffiliation feared the decline and disintegration of the ILP. As events unfolded, it became clear that the ILP was failing. Instead of a new age dawning, the ILP descended into internecine conflict between reformists and Marxists, pro-Labour Party and anti-Labour Party groups, and became divided between prominent charismatic leaders, as it floundered between affiliation with the communist, political independence, and possible re-affiliation with the Labour Party by the end of the 1930s. Inevitably, the membership of the ILP, which had more than halved since the mid-1920s, fell even more dramatically from 16,773 at the beginning of 1932 to 2,441 in 1939.¹ By the end of the 1930s the ILP had become a sect rather than a political party, and Hugh Dalton was justified in referring, dismissively, to the 'The ILP flea'.² Disaffiliation had destroyed the unity of the party and reduced its membership just at the time when it struggled to define its new revolutionary policy, its relations with communism, and the demand for a United Front against Fascism whilst holding on to its independence of action as a political organisation.

Post-disaffiliation division and decline

Disaffiliation immediately began a process of political detachment from the Labour Party. On 1 August 1932, Councillor George R. Smith, of the Wakefield ILP, wrote to Councillor T. Crowe, Secretary of the Labour Group in Wakefield, indicating that he believed in the ILP's 'fight against the policies of compromise' and promptly resigned from the Labour Party,³ as did G. E. Smith, Honorary Secretary of the Wakefield ILP branch.⁴ Seven members of the Labour group in Glasgow Town Hall followed suit.⁵ Members of the Bradford ILP withdrew from the Labour Party, as did members throughout the country. About 70 of the 90 London branches were reported to be in favour of disaffiliation.⁶ There was strong support for disaffiliation in the Bilston branch, in the Midlands, where A. W. Pugh and J. W. Pugh led a revolt against the prevailing affiliationist position of

some members. The ILP branches in Derby, Nottingham and Norwich also left the Labour Party and continued to be active with an increased membership for a number of years.⁷ Indeed, the *New Leader* optimistically claimed that as a result of disaffiliation, the ILP 'will gain in membership and branches far more than it will lose'.⁸ This was never likely to be the case.

Indeed, there remained a substantial groundswell of ILP opinion against disaffiliation. The Yorkshire branches were clearly divided, many eventually leaving to remain within the Labour Party. In Lancashire, a number of the large branches, including Platting, Farnworth, Nelson and Colne, declared themselves anti-disaffiliationists.⁹ Indeed, the Labour correspondent of *The Times* remarked of the ILP upon

the intention of its [affiliationist] leaders to organise the dissenting branches [in]to a new association maintaining affiliation with the Labour Party and the probability also of a legal battle over the ownership of party property, combined with the spirits of the victors in the debate.¹⁰

The Bradford ILP lost 31 of its 32 councillors to Labour in August 1932 and more than half of its already much-declined membership of 750 in 1932.¹¹

From August 1932 attempts were made to reverse disaffiliation. A group opposed to disaffiliation met at the end of the Bradford Special Conference to form the National Provisional Affiliation Committee and convened in London on 20 August. There were 95 delegates present, more than a third of the number who had attended the Special Conference,¹² and these included prominent national and local figures such as Brailsford, Dollan, Dan Griffiths, Creech Jones, Kirkwood (MP), Leach, A. Pickles, Ben Riley, Wise and F. Wynne Davies. They came largely from Yorkshire, London and Scotland.¹³

There were also many divisional meetings by the anti-disaffiliationists. In the Yorkshire division, County Councillor Hyman, Alderman A. Pickles, Councillors J. J. Wilson and Councillor A. W. Brown, all from Bradford, convened a meeting at Jowett Hall, the centre of ILP activity in Bradford, on 8 August to help organise support for the re-affiliation campaign and also arranged a Yorkshire Conference of Affiliated ILPers on Saturday, 24 September 1932, at which Leach was present.¹⁴

There were similar deep divisions in Scotland where, within a few months of disaffiliation, 128 of the 275 ILP branches had reverted to Labour.¹⁵ The main focus of disaffiliation seems to have been Glasgow, where three of the five ILP MPs had their seats.¹⁶ Shettleston, Govanhill, Hutchesontown and Queens Cross were amongst the Glasgow branches that favoured disaffiliation, along with Corluke and Lanark.¹⁷ Nevertheless, 33 of the 40 ILP Glasgow representatives, who formed part of the 43 Labour Party representatives on the City Council, established their own group against disaffiliation by 16 August 1932.¹⁸ In the wake of this Dollan held an Affiliation Conference at Glasgow on 21 August 1932, which attracted 500 ILP members from all over Scotland, and claimed that 'the Bradford Conference did not represent the opinion of the ILP' and promptly defamed

Maxton as the 'Robinson Crusoe of working-class politics'.¹⁹ This led to his expulsion from the ILP, along with 14 other prominent Scottish ILP figures. McGovern added that 'No Pat, you are being expelled because you and your friends have urged that the branches should not convey . . . a very dramatic decision of the party'.²⁰ Subsequently, many ILP branches such as Bo'ness fought off attempts at disaffiliation and saw their members expelled from the ILP in Glasgow on 11 September 1932, and helped form the Provisional Committee of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) on 5 October 1932, which remained affiliated to the Labour Party – although Woodburn, its secretary, observed that the Labour Party in Scotland was a federal body driven by the ILP and that 'my job was practically to build from scratch'.²¹ The new party was primarily organised by Dollan and Kirkwood and, by the end of 1932, had 100 branches with over a 1,000 members.

The anti-Disaffiliation movement reached the climax of its brief existence on 2 October 1932 when, at a meeting held as a prologue to the Leicester Labour Party Conference, the Socialist League (SL) was formed and linked itself with the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), the Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda (SSIP), and other socialist bodies, and affiliated to the Labour Party.²² Wise chaired the meeting, which drew up a draft constitution forming a provisional committee which included many former members of the ILP. Apart from Wise, as chairman, those present included Brailsford, G. D. H. Cole, Stafford Cripps, J. F. Horrabin, Kirkwood MP, William Mellor, Arthur Pugh, Alfred Salter, Sir Charles P. Trevelyan, and Mrs F. Pethick-Lawrence.²³ The formation of the SL offered an alternative organisation for many ex-members of the ILP.

Inevitably, ILP branch numbers declined rapidly in the 1930s. Of the 653 ILP branches in February 1932, only 288 had given definite support for disaffiliation, some by very small majorities.²⁴ By the end of 1932 the ILP was down to 450 branches and had only, as Table 5.1 indicates, 284 in 1935.²⁵ These figures contrast sharply with the pre-war total of 887 in 1909 and an inter-war peak of 1,028 in 1925.²⁶

Table 5.1 Divisional branch numbers for the Independent Labour Party at various dates between 1922 and 1935²⁷

	1922	1929	1930	1931	1932	1932	1935
						<i>(Post disaff.)</i>	
Scotland (and Ireland)	158	262	275	273	250	122	91
North-Eastern counties	58	64	59	54	49	36	21
Yorkshire	76	65	69	63	63	40	24
Midland counties	57	58	57	56	45	37	22
Eastern counties (East Anglia)	11	13	12	10	8	8	5
London and Southern counties	74	100	107	98	89	88	56
South-Western counties	23	23	23	21	23	19	15
Wales and Monmouth	60	71	53	45	40	28	21
Lancashire	97	90	93	92	86	72	24
Total	614	746	748	712	653	450	284

In five of six ILP Divisions opposed to disaffiliation there was, as might be expected, a greater fall in branch and membership numbers than in the other three, London, the Eastern Counties, and the South – in Western counties, disaffiliation was supported, though membership declined everywhere. Also, as previously indicated, the membership of the ILP dropped sharply from 16,773 at the beginning of 1932 to 11,092 in 1933, 7,166 in 1934, 4,392 in 1935 and eventually to a low of 2,441 in 1939.²⁸ This suggests that initially about a third of ILP members in 1932 left the ILP because of disaffiliation. Most of the remainder fell away as the Unity Group and the RPC departed and as the ILP fragmented into warring factions. This decline hit the already parlous financial position of the ILP, the fees for which fell from £1,445 13s 2d in 1931 to £329 8s 11d in 1935 and £221 2s 6d by 1939.²⁹

Within less than eight months of the Special Conference at Bradford, on the eve of the 1933 Annual Conference at Derby, the NAC had come to recognise the failure of disaffiliation. Indeed, the NAC in its 'Draft Statement of Policy', ostensibly about the new revolutionary policy, presented to the Derby Conference (1933), suggested that 'The results are the reverse of satisfactory'.³⁰ With declining membership, few lasting results from the ad hoc committees, 'very bad' election results, and 'the prestige of the ILP is now at a lower level amongst the workers than ever before'. Evidently, the reason for this failure was that the Labour Party was recovering its vote, 'despite its past', and 'the Labour Party today is the immediate expression of the masses'. The report reflected that

All the ILP can claim are isolated individual successes, some dwindling support based upon sentimental regard for our past, occasional large meetings and a weekly paper whose struggle for existence absorbs the major part of the energy of the membership. This is all the past two years 'independent' policy associated with the CP has left us. . . .

Our weaknesses are a lack of programme and of policy, immediate and long-term.³¹

The report also reflected that the Third International policy was not likely to produce a United Front against capitalism but, nevertheless, felt that the ILP should try to organise workers and trade unions into a united front.

This analysis was astute, almost prophetic, in terms of what occurred over the next two years. The SSP and the Labour Party took over left-wing policies in Scotland. In Lancashire many ILP members moved back into the Labour Party and others joined the newly emerging Unity Group to counter the Revolutionary Policy Committee (RPC), which was drawing support from London, East Anglia and Lancashire, before forming the Independent Socialist Party (ISP) in 1934.³² In London, many ILP activists joined the RCP and formed a Third International Group before leaving for the communist party in 1935. The ILP in the textile district of the West Riding of Yorkshire collapsed. Even Jowett failed to win Bradford East in the 1935 general election. At the municipal level the ILP achieved only patchy success in Nottingham, Derby, Norwich, Keighley and Bradford. It

was in this climate of decline that the ILP was charged with producing its new 'revolutionary' policy and of possibly affiliating with the Third International, with disastrous and divisive results for the Party as a whole.

The evolution of a revolutionary policy: communism, workers' councils or parliamentary action

The RPC, Dr. Cullen and the Poplar ILP had first established a committee to work for disaffiliation and a new revolutionary policy in 1930.³³ Cullen and the RPC published their views in a document that contrasted the failure of capitalism with the rise of the Soviet Union.³⁴ Despite some setbacks at the Blackpool Conference of April 1932, the RPC was convinced that disaffiliation was about to occur, that the ILP needed to develop new, more direct, industrial policies of action, based upon workers' councils, and the need for revolutionary action, and bloody revolution if necessary.³⁵ However, these ideas were rejected by the delegates at the Special Conference at Bradford in July 1932 because they were communist-inspired. Nevertheless, their views resonated around the London Division and other divisions of the ILP in the ensuing months. And there were at least two other contending alternatives as to what was meant by a revolutionary policy.

John Middleton Murry, a self-proclaimed communist though not a member of the CPGB, was active in the Norwich branch of the East Anglian division of the ILP but was critical of the RPC's view of what a revolutionary policy should be. In his book, *The Necessity of Communism*, he suggested that the Soviet model was not to be followed since it would not meet British circumstances.³⁶ He argued that a programme pressing ahead with the 'Socialism in Our Time' campaign could be pushed forward to demand a living wage of about 10 per cent above unemployment benefit levels, and believed that, in the old ethical and moral vein of the ILP, 'revolutionary Socialism is the modern form of the Christian religion'.³⁷ Claiming to reflect a variety of revolutionary experiences that Marxism offered, Murry looked to the ILP to exploit every possible avenue and for the Guild of Youth to act as young, revolutionary, streetfighters, and to take courses of action which still offered the prospect of parliamentary activity.³⁸ His approach to revolutionary socialist policies was clearly at odds with that of the RPC and communists, and much more in line with the ethical and religious approach of the past which advocated revolutionary change by exploiting opportunities for change. This was about revolutionary social change by external pressure rather than change at the barrel of a gun. At the Annual Easter Conference at York in 1934, his amendment 'that constitutionalism was the only real line of activity for revolutionary policy in this country' was defeated by 101 votes to 61, and prompted his departure from the ILP, with the Unity Group, into the Independent Socialist Party.³⁹

Whilst both Brockway and Maxton remained vague about what revolutionary policy really meant, other than asserting that some form of workers' council action would be used alongside the use of parliamentary agitation when necessary, it was Paton who offered a clear picture of a third alternative vision to the amorphous revolutionary policy concept. In his memoir, *Left Turn!*, he opposed

the RPC idea of workers' councils and wanted the ILP to absorb the CPGB into its cause of presenting communist ideas in terms that the British would recognise. This meant softening the approach and possibly working through Parliament.⁴⁰

What was the ILP to do? Was it to develop its new revolutionary policy through workers' councils, strike action and 'bloody' conflict, or should it develop a more ethical, moral or religious approach to revolutionary policy, or one which involved some kind of parliamentary action to bring about change? Also, what was any decision to mean for the ILP's possible relations with the communist and Labour parties in the future now that it had joined the pantheon of independent socialist parties?

Having left the Labour Party, the exigent need of the ILP was to establish whether or not there was a possibility of affiliating to the Third International, particularly given the influence of the RPC and the pressure for a revolutionary constitution. A meeting between representatives of the CPGB and the ILP, held on 11 March 1933 just before the 1933 Derby Conference, was opportune for it gave the RPC and Rajani Palme Dutt, a formative figure in the CPGB and Western European Communism, hope for constructive talks between the two parties, even though two undercover communist-supporting members of the Affiliation Committee, one of whom was Bob Edwards, were suspended from the ILP.⁴¹ This meeting was timely since it coincided with Hitler's rise to power in Germany and consequent introduction of the Third International's new policy of a United Front Against Fascism.

The pressure of the London Division of the ILP, dominated by the RPC, was for the 1933 Derby Conference to discuss a new constitution to incorporate a new 'revolutionary' policy which might ease the way for affiliation to the Third International. However, there were difficulties. It was clear that Paton, the General Secretary, was not prepared to reveal the intended new constitution of the ILP before the conference and then criticised the pressure being exerted by the RPC, particularly through its 'Bulletin No 8', which he felt challenged the tendencies of the ILP.⁴² Nevertheless, John Gaster, for the London Division and the RPC, stressed at the Derby Conference that the ILP was a revolutionary machine seeking to seize power for capitalism by every means possible. In the end, the NAC supported Paton by suggesting that the July 1932 Bradford Special Conference had moved the ILP to a revolutionary base and called for the development of a working-class organisation based upon industrial power whilst still maintaining the benefits of a parliamentary presence.⁴³ A nuanced, but animated, debate developed around the workers' councils and parliamentary action. Brockway, in his Chairman's speech, suggested the need for workers' councils to run industry, the inadequacy of Parliament and the need to 'build a united front in the international field'.⁴⁴ Maxton, on the other hand, and supported by Jowett, felt that, whilst industrial action and class organisation was the only way to overthrow capitalism, parliamentary activity, 'the instrument of government in a capitalist state' could be used as an auxiliary in providing a means of agitation and occasional concessions from capitalism.⁴⁵ Murry harped back to the traditions of the ILP and the importance of Parliament in bringing about Marxist change. Jennie Lee disagreed

with him, arguing that the choice was between the capitalist state machine or workers' control. The Conference was clearly alight with conflicting opinions and an atmosphere of obfuscation.

Despite the demand of the RPC and the London division that the new revolutionary constitution, promulgated at Bradford six months before, should be voted on by one single vote, it was decided that it would be taken item by item. Step by step the new revolutionary policy was incorporated into the evolving ILP constitution. Slowly, the new constitution committed ILP members to full acceptance of its principles and to oppose imperialism and support the Soviet Union, by 91 votes to 68. It accepted that the economic resources should be communally owned, by a mere 87 votes to 80. However, it rejected, by 90 votes to 87, the RPC notion that workers' councils and unemployed organisation would be the basis of the bringing about change.⁴⁶ Indeed, the Lancashire ILPers, including their leading figure E. J. Sandham, felt that Parliament still had a part to play.⁴⁷ Clearly, the RPC did not entirely get its way in the constitution debate, though Cohen argues that it was 'a considerable victory for the RPC', and the *New Leader*, reporting on the conference, regarded it as 'The Marxists Field Day'.⁴⁸ It also reported that the RPC had held meetings at the beginning and the end of the conference, with 50 or more delegates on both occasions.

Whilst the RPC may not have got all that it wanted at the Derby Conference, it is clear that the outcome was upsetting to R. C. Wallhead, MP, who resigned from the Party. Although the *New Leader* noted that the Derby decision did not negate the value of Parliament, Wallhead saw it as 'relegating the use of Parliament to a minor place and substituting for it a physical force revolution through Workers' Councils'.⁴⁹ In the published exchange of letters between Wallhead and Brockway, the latter suggested that Wallhead was wrong and that the Derby decision could be interpreted both ways as support for workers' councils and for Parliament.⁵⁰ Also, although Wallhead's resignation was ostensibly about the new direction of the ILP, it is also possible that Wallhead resigned because of an error in the system of counting votes, which left him off the NAC of the ILP, even though the successful candidates had offered to allow the vote to be re-taken.⁵¹

The ILP was now divided between those wishing to co-operate with the communists in revolutionary change and those desiring to maintain its traditional, more parliamentary approach to political change. There was no clear leadership from Maxton and Brockway; the editor of the *New Leader* was equivocal about whether or not the ILP had abandoned parliamentarism in favour of revolutionary change, although he sensed there had been a change in the mood of the Party as fascism became an increasing danger.⁵² It, supported by Jowett, still advocated that Parliament remained the instrument of political change, whilst Maxton argued that parliamentary change had not been abandoned but maintained that 'it was only a small part of the fight'.⁵³

E. J. Sandham, of the Lancashire Division, took the matter further and, at the NAC meeting in June 1933, attributed a recent fall of ILP membership to the communist policy of the United Front against Fascism being pursued by a significant number of ILP branches.⁵⁴ At this hard-fought meeting, John Gaster, of the

London Division, and the RPC, felt that the NAC could not change a conference decision to support the United Front whilst Percy Williams, of Yorkshire, felt that the United Front policy was disastrous. In the end, the meeting's support for the United Front policy was reflected in a vote in favour of seven to three, and it would appear that the other eight who were present abstained. Whilst there was support for a United Front with the communists in the NAC, there was no ringing endorsement for this policy, as was revealed by the survey of ILP joint activities with the CPGB in 1934.⁵⁵ Yet the meeting was hardly satisfactory, and many of those present favoured the continuation of parliamentary action alongside, or as part of, revolutionary action. What was required was a clear stand, but this was not to come as the NAC continued to debate the future constitution, the role of the workers' council in uniting the socialist movement, and what was meant by revolutionary activity and its relationship to parliamentary activity.

It was obvious that the Derby Conference (1933) and its aftermath did not resolve the problems of policy that divided the Party. The ILP sub-committee on General Policy, which met every July, could find no solution. In 1933, it produced a report favouring the organisation of workers' councils together with all political parties and interested groups, and even factory committees, and supporting a united front with the communists. This was challenged in a rival report from Paton, who objected to the relegation of parliamentary activities to a minor agency of change. Shortly afterwards, Paton resigned as General Secretary of the ILP, condemning any attempt to undermine the role of parliamentary activity, whilst Brockway continued to maintain that parliamentary activity was an incidental part of the transformation of capitalism. Paton was followed into resignation by his second wife, Florence Paton, who subsequently became the Labour MP for Rushcliffe in 1945.⁵⁶

It was thus clear that the ILP's revolutionary policy was capable of several interpretations. When the Sub-Committee introduced its final report and it was voted upon, along with alternative versions, and was passed by ten votes to five, with Sandham, Jowett, Campbell Stephens, Williams and James in the minority, and with Gaster, of London and the RPC, in the majority, winning the day with workers' councils as the basis for the introduction of a revolutionary policy, whilst not fully accepting the statement about the continuing place of parliamentary activity, albeit a subsidiary role.⁵⁷

The *New Leader* reported upon the outcome and implications of the revolutionary policy on 11 August 1933, suggesting also that a clear lead had been made in directing the ILP to work with the communists, though it was clear that there had been some major disputes. Brockway, now the General Secretary of the ILP, and Maxton, now the Chairman, did their best to provide guidance in their pamphlet, *A Clear Lead*, but even this was potentially contradictory, suggesting the need to work with the communists, on the United Front and other policies, whilst suggesting that the two parties were different and that the ILP given that the CPGB was wedded to the organisational and financial control of Moscow 'Under present conditions the amalgamation of the ILP and the Communist Party is impossible'.⁵⁸

The ILP and internal reactions to an elusive agreement with the Third International

The Derby Conference (1933) had produced a revolutionary policy of kinds and steered the ILP towards closer co-operation with the communists. This led to a re-examination of the 21 conditions for ILP membership of the Third International, discussed in the 1920s, and now revisited in an atmosphere of admiration for the Soviet Union.⁵⁹ As occurred in the earlier negotiations, the ILP sought to protect and preserve its right to independent action. Inevitably, this meant that the Third International and the ILP were never likely to agree as they traded insults once again about the value and meaning of revolutionary politics. It became clear that their means of bringing about revolution differed – the Third International stressing the necessity of a bloody revolution, whilst Brockway, Maxton and the ILP envisaged change through workers' councils, industrial conflict, and even residual parliamentary means.

The protracted and bitter negotiations between the ILP and the Third International, examined in detail in Chapter 6, led to moves by Brockway and Maxton to block any serious attempt by the ILP to affiliate to the Third International. This was particularly evident at the Annual Easter Conference of the ILP held at York in 1934, where there was a determined attempt to get the ILP to apply for affiliation to the Third International, led by the RPC and a new Affiliation Group organised by R. Edward and Eric Whalley. This was defeated by 85 votes to 66, although some moves towards a democratic centralist organisation, operating democracy from the centre of the ILP, as favoured by the CPGB and the Third International, were achieved. However, Murry, Sandham and the Lancashire ILP-ers were equally frustrated. Murry's Norwich branch had pushed for a resolution that the powers of parliamentary representatives should be established by constitutional means and democratic consent. This worried Cullen and the RPC but the motion was defeated by 101 votes to 61, alarming the Lancashire delegates and those connected with the Unity Group, which immediately left the ILP, an event which will be examined separately later.⁶⁰ Some ILPers felt that the Conference was an attempt to deliver the ILP to the RPC and the communists, whilst RPC members saw it as a failure to settle anything in terms of clarifying the Party's position on the revolutionary policy and the future relationship with communism and the Third International.⁶¹ The RPC was clearly unsuccessful in delivering the ILP to the Third International but sent a delegation to the USSR in May 1934, where they met representatives of the Third International and the CPSU, putting 15 questions to them to clarify misunderstandings. They did no such thing, and despite some successes, the RPC was hovering on the edge of also leaving the ILP, as the Unity Group and others had done, despite its prominent position within the Party. In the end it did not do so until the end of 1935, when the ILP became even more divided over the Abyssinian crisis and the position of the Soviet Union, which had just become a member of the League of Nations, in supporting its boycott against Italy.

The ILP, communism, the Guild of Youth and the United Front

The RPC had gained influence on the NAC and Conference, thus greatly shaping the new revolutionary constitution of the ILP in 1933. Indeed, there appeared to be increasing communist influence within the ILP, though this belied the true picture throughout the branches. The CPGB's policy of 'Class Against Class' from 1928 until 1933 Britain, had been directed against the Labour Party, and therefore also the ILP until the end of 1932. However, from 1933 until 1935 the fear of Hitler and fascism in Europe drove the Third International to announce a 'United Front Against Fascism', attempting to unite socialist groups in that campaign. On its failure, in 1935, the Seventh Congress of the Third International announced a 'Popular Front' to bring all opponents of fascism together, regardless of their socialist or liberal policies. Nevertheless, it is clear that the ILP remained cool and distant in its relationship with the communist organisations in Britain, partly due to the strain of negotiation with the Labour Party but above all because of the fear of communist infiltration, of which the RPC was considered a form.

The influence of the RPC was limited mainly to parts of the London ILP, as has become evident. The relations between the ILP and the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM), seen as an auxiliary organisation to the CPGB, over the hunger marches of the unemployed, had also been limited and fitful, although John Aplin, the London Divisional Organiser, did play a part in organising the 1934 Hunger March.⁶² Indeed, this limited, and partly focused relationship, was revealed in a survey of ILP branch co-operation with the CPGB conducted at the beginning of 1934 (Appendix 3). It gathered 137 responses from the 353 branches contacted, and clearly suggested the marginal influence of communism.⁶³ There was a mixed and complex response to seven questions, to which some branches only partially responded. It emerged that 84 branches had co-operated with the CPGB on a limited basis and that 35 had not done so but there were strong divisional differences. In London, 20 of the branches who responded to the survey had worked with the CPGB and six had not. The situation was similar in Yorkshire, the figures being 21 to three, respectively, but in Scotland the figures were only 15 to nine. However, of these joint activities' focus: 40 were on anti-war campaigns, 26 on anti-fascist events, 33 in association with a Hunger March, and 37 on other various activities. And a substantial majority (66 to 44 in the survey) favoured limited future co-operation fixed around issues such as German relief, anti-war meetings and unemployment, even though a substantial majority of branches felt that such co-operation would, indeed, help create a United Front for the working class. Brockway suggested that most comments had come from branches who opposed continuation with the CPGB, though he offered no evidence of this, and

His broad conclusion on the figures reported and a survey of the replies as a whole was that a majority of branches were in favour of co-operation with the communist party on a specific basis, but that there was a small majority

against co-operation in general activity. A definite majority desired a certain amount of local autonomy.

The advice was that the branches should carry out a minimum of co-operation.

This position became very evident at the Annual Easter Conference at York in 1934. The United Front discussion threw up many variants. The RPC, Aplin and some London branches favoured a close association with the CPGB, whilst Johnson (Norwich ILP) felt that any collaboration had to go beyond just working with the CPGB, and Kaye (Barnsley ILP) wished to co-ordinate action with the CPGB. In the end, after the defeat of several resolutions, the Sheffield resolution suggesting the need to continue with normal party activity in co-operation with other organisations was passed. In other words, there was to be a minimum of co-operation when necessary, and no definite commitment to organising joint United Front activities.⁶⁴

The approved resolution threw increasing light on to the way in which the Guild of Youth had been infiltrated by communists, who attended the York Conference in numbers: 'a good section of red-shirted members of the Guild of Youth who held the platform and led the delegates in singing the International'.⁶⁵ Despite the decline of the ILP since the mid and late 1920s, the Guild of Youth had remained a small, but relatively important, part of the ILP organisation and its youth. In 1932 it had 64 active branches, a decline from the 170 of the mid-1920s, and by the beginning of 1934 it had 68 active branches – 17 in Scotland, four in the North-East, seven in Yorkshire, nine in the Midlands, two in East Anglia, 17 in London and the South, one in the South-West, six in Wales, and five in Lancashire.⁶⁶ The Guild was clearly strongest in Scotland, the Midlands and London, though all ILP Divisions had some Guild branches focused upon epicentres of ILP support. Nearly always to the left of the ILP, the Guild movement became a target for the Young Communist League (YCL) from the end of 1933 and a focus of CPGB deliberations. In many areas, it was co-operating closely with the communists, and this had become a matter of concern at the ILP Easter Conference at York in 1934. Here, and by the most decisive vote of the Conference, there was a reference backing the Guild of Youth paragraph in the NAC Report on the grounds that the Guild Chairman could give no guarantee that the Guild would not affiliate sympathetically with the YCL. This decision appeared to be justified when, in May 1934 three representatives of the Guild – Lewis Povey, Jack Huntz of London and Comrade McFarlane of Bridgeton – attended a meeting with YCL representatives in Paris, overseen by McGovern of the NAC. Two of the Guild representatives were members of the YCL, and the advice of the representatives to the Guild Conference at Norwich on 20–21 May 1934 was to affiliate to the YCL. Indeed, there was considerable discussion at this Conference, which attracted only 30 delegates from 28 guilds. Sam McAskie advocated sympathetic affiliation to the YCL, he claimed on behalf of the Scottish Divisional Council now reduced by the loss of the Unity Group, and was supported by Keble (South-West Ham) and others. Brockway, who attended from the NAC, reminded the Guild that the ILP had taken a risk forming a junior section and that whilst they had autonomy

that involved certain obligations, the ILP would have to consider the situation if the Guild passed a resolution that conflicted with its policy.⁶⁷ Tom Hamilton, for the NAC, said that the YCL did not have freedom and was dominated by the Third International, and that 'The ILP was the effective revolutionary organisation of the country, and the Guild must choose between the ILP and the YCL', whilst W. Wilkinson (Midland Divisional Council) felt that the Guild 'could be used as a lever against the ILP'. However, the majority seemed to agree with Williams (Edge Hill) who demanded the break with 'Reformism', and voted for sympathetic affiliation with the YCL by 18 votes to 12.⁶⁸

By June 1934 the Guild of Youth was under close investigation. Povey, its representative, attended a meeting of the NAC on 10 June 1934 but was forced to leave, protesting that there was no constitutional authority to prevent his attendance. The NAC then met a deputation from the Guild of Youth National Council, comprised of Sam McAskie (Chairman), Povey (Secretary), Evelyn Herp (Organiser), S. Chamberlain (Treasurer) and H. Bromley (London representative). Maxton, the Chairman of the NAC, stated that before agreeing to the continuance of a Guild of Youth representative on the NAC, the Council must be assured that the first loyalty of the Guild and the representative was to the ILP and not to an external organisation. Brockway (ILP General Secretary) then produced a report which referred to McGovern's attendance at the consultation between the Guild of Youth representatives and representatives of the Young Communist International (YCI) at Paris. He had reported on the Guild of Youth Conference decision, which was taken to affiliate sympathetically to the YCI, and further noted that the Glasgow ILP Federation had therefore recommended that the Guild movement be brought into line by the Party. The response to these statements was led by McAskie, of the Guild, who asked for particulars of a Glasgow statement, which was then read aloud by Brockway. Despite this, Povey maintained that the Guild was an integral part of the ILP but that it had autonomy in policy and had, in the past, differed from the ILP with impunity; for example, it had severed its connection with the Socialist Youth International of the Second International even before the ILP severed its connection with the Second International. Povey felt that the Guild was acting constitutionally and that sympathetic affiliation to the YCI would not mean communist control. To him, the message was clear; the Guild had not accepted Communist Policy and was loyal to the ILP, which had a working arrangement with the CPGB, and that the YCL also recognised this loyalty, which would continue unless the it took unconstitutional action. Povey added that the threat, if the NAC turned down the decisions taken at the Guild Conference, means it would be compelled to reconsider its attitude towards the ILP. After some discussion, Povey, on a proposal from Gaster which was seconded by A. Smillie, was admitted back into the NAC.

The NAC also discussed a letter from the Midland Divisional Council of the Guild opposing the decision of the Guild to sympathetically affiliate to the YCL, after which Gaster proposed the suspension of the rights of Guild members to Party membership until the next Guild conference. Discussions went on and Povey came back with a resolution on the inviolable right of the Guild Annual

Conference to decide its own organisational and political line. Several votes were then taken: Gaster's resolution being defeated by 12 votes to two; and Povey's resolution defeated by nine votes to three (the three being Smillie, Gaster and Povey). Eventually a resolution by Sam Leckie was passed by 12 to two votes to the effect

That the NAC inform the Guild Council that the decision of the Norwich Conference is incompatible with the Guild remaining the youth section of the ILP and raises a difficult organisational situation with the joint membership of two bodies. It asks the Guild to consider this view immediately, to convey it to the Guild branches, and to report its decision to the NAC by its next meeting.

Thereafter, the Guild of Youth was gradually brought back into line with the ILP, the General Council of the Guild of Youth voting three to two to terminate sympathetic affiliation to YCL to prevent a split with the NAC. The ILP Annual Conference of 1935 removed the political autonomy of the Guild, and a Special Conference held at Armley in Leeds in June 1935 established the need for a closer connection with the ILP.⁶⁹ At this point some Guild branches joined the YCL, as did Povey and many of the leading figures.⁷⁰ Many branches were restructured, and, subsequently, about 25 per cent of the Guild membership refused to accept the imposed new ideas and the new structure that emerged under Bob Smillie, the son of the Scottish ILP Chairman. They left and those who remained established a new loyal ILP journal, *Rebel Youth*. By 1937 the Guild officials were effectively appointed by an ILP Committee, and Bob Smillie was re-appointed Chairman whilst languishing in a communist prison in Spain.

Executive Committee and Inner Executive Committee: central control of the ILP and the Third International

As if the isolating of communist influence within the ILP and the Guild of Help was not enough, Maxton, Brockway and some of the senior figures in the Party sought to strengthen their control over the ILP's administrative structure after the York Conference of 1934, when the NAC formed an Executive Committee and the Inner Executive (IE) to improve the decision-making of the Party. The IE would meet every six weeks as against the NAC, which would now meet every three months. The Executive Committee was to consist of the Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and five members, three from 1935, elected by the EC from its own membership. The first Executive Committee consisted of Maxton, Jowett, Brockway, Stephen, Tom Stephenson, James Lee and Charles Arthur Smith. The IE of this body initially consisted of Maxton, McGovern, Stephen and Smith, but was down to three members in 1935, with Smith having lost his position.⁷¹ The IE, in particular, was dominated by figures who were unlikely to surrender ILP rights to communism and the Third International, and radical change was made even more unlikely by the fact that the York Conference had also agreed that

the NAC could make changes to the constitution, but only with the support of two-thirds of the membership. The presence of Maxton and Brockway ensured that those committed to maintaining the independence of action of the ILP views would be defended and, to the continuing frustration of the RPC, links with the CPGB and the Third International would be suppressed.⁷²

In this climate of ongoing dissension within the British Left, the ILP finally felt the need to put its policy on the Third International to the scrutiny at the Annual ILP Conference held at the Keir Hardie Hall, Derby, in April 1935.⁷³ In a long and detailed report, it argued that the Soviet Union had created a social structure far superior to that of failing capitalism and that, in contrast, the Labour Party and trade union leaders in Britain were wedded to the belief that 'the owning class can be dispossessed by the reliance only upon Parliamentary and Constitutional Methods', although it was acknowledged that the Labour Party 'Left Wing' was committed to building up a revolutionary policy capable of resisting fascism, war and capitalism.⁷⁴ In defining itself as one of the two revolutionary parties in Britain, alongside the communist party, the ILP proceeded to contrast its approach with that of the CPGB. It argued that the CPGB's hostile attitude to the reformist workers within the trade union movement makes 'united action difficult' whilst it sought to build up a strong Revolutionary Socialist Party with a programme 'adapted to the economic conditions, political problems and traditions of the country'.⁷⁵ It concluded that

Whilst the present differences in policy, tactics and organisational basis, and international association, exist any attempt to combine the ILP and the Communist Party would have divisive rather than unifying results. The united Revolutionary Socialist Party will result from the growth of a common policy and organisational base through united action in Britain and from the unifying of the Revolutionary Movement in the International field.⁷⁶

The ILP's revolutionary policy was thus to rest on the democratic organisation of the Party, not the democratic centralism of communism, to operate through the Annual Conference, representing the members and branches, and interpreted by the democratically elected NAC. The assumption was that change would come through workers' councils, which would represent every section of the working class at their places of employment, but which would encourage street work, factory committees, and through pressing trade union leaders to recognise that they were in a minority situation and to change their policies since their policies of collaborating would not bring about the change that only class struggle could.

Given these types of views, it is no surprise that the belligerent negotiations between the ILP and the Third International broke down again. The *New Leader* produced articles criticising the Soviet Union and its foreign policy, whilst *The Daily Worker*, organ of the CPGB, criticised the compromising nature of the ILP.⁷⁷ Even within London, it was being challenged by C. L. R. James, later a famous cricket writer who was chairman of the Finchley ILP and spokesman for the Marxist Group, a Trotskyist organisation within the ILP.⁷⁸ In this climate of

intransigence and dissent, Cullen and the RPC left the ILP and joined the CPGB in November 1935.⁷⁹

Relations between the ILP and the Third International worsened as events moved towards the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in June 1936. Indeed, in 1936 the ILP published a pamphlet of Leon Trotsky's, gathering together his writings on the ILP published between December 1935 and June 1936, articles which themselves were quite critical of the ILP's liaison with the CPGB and the Third International.⁸⁰ Trotsky identified, wrongly as emerged, that the ILP was close to the CPGB and the Third International after the 1932 split with the Labour Party, though he recognised that *The New Leader* had retained an independent attitude. Indeed, he surmised that the ILP was close to the Communist International for

It did not pay the necessary attention to the mass work which cannot be carried on outside of the trade unions and the Labour Party; instead it became seduced by the Amsterdam-Pleyal masquerade, the Anti-Imperialist League and other surrogates of revolutionary activity. As a result, it appeared to the workers as a second grade Communist Party.⁸¹

To Trotsky the ILP had long been besotted by Stalin's 'falsification of Leninism' caused, it would appear, by the fact that 'For the ILP, the last two years have been scanty in success'.⁸² The ILP had not come to learn the meaning of Stalin's policy of socialism in one country and was stuck midway between pacifism and proletarian revolution.

Be that as it may, the real problem for the ILP was defining its new revolutionary policy and where it stood. Few within the ILP, never mind the mass of the British working class, fully understood what the ILP stood for because of its conflicted and factional situation. Indeed, in a period which saw the ILP lose membership as a result of disaffiliation, others were resigning over the new policy. Wallhead MP resigned from the Party over the new revolutionary policy, Paton resigned as General Secretary for the same reason, and the RPC at the end of 1935 left because of the failure to get the Party to join the Third International. It is evident that no clear and unambiguous revolutionary policy had emerged. This was even further emphasised with the parallel development of a Unity Group within the ILP, committed to parliamentary action, which also left in 1934 to form the Independent Socialist Party with around half the membership of the ILP in the Lancashire Division.

Opposition and the defection of the Lancashire Unity Committee and the RPC 1934–1935: from Unity Group to Independent Socialist Party

Just as the ILP was deeply involved in the protracted debates about new revolutionary policy and the increasingly frustrated affiliation to the Third International, with the consequent loss of many of its communist and Left-wing members, so the power-struggle over the new revolutionary policy drove out many of those who

supported the older ethical and parliamentary policies. Allen Skinner, Chairman of the London and Southern Counties Division, stood down from that office in September 1932, largely because he had become almost a siren voice against the anti-parliamentary attitude of his area which had been dominated by the RPC after disaffiliation.⁸³ The Derby Conference of 1933 had seen similar concerns emerging from Elijah Sandham and the Lancashire Division, and through *Labour's Northern Voice* in June 1933, Skinner suggested to them the need to form a 'protective caucus' against the RPC.⁸⁴ This attracted widespread support in Lancashire and led to the immediate formation of the Unity Group. The Lancashire Division immediately stopped supporting the United Front activities of the communists, although the Liverpool Federation still continued to do so.⁸⁵ It failed to contribute to the Power Fund Campaign, aimed at raising money for political campaigns, opposed payment of the editor of the *New Leader*, and asserted the autonomy of the ILP branches.

It was very clear that there was a threat that the Lancashire Division would withdraw from the ILP, and there was a strong indication that Brockway was being encouraged, by the communist *Daily Worker*, to expel it from the ILP.⁸⁶ The Lancashire Division produced a circular on 17 June 1933 recommending that branches refuse to collaborate with the communist party and also rejected Paton's appeal to withdraw their circular by a vote of 31 to 26. In this turmoil there was discussion of the possibility of the Lancashire Division being re-organised. By now, something of an impasse had been reached between the London and South East support for the RPC and support from the Welsh Division, Bradford, Norwich, Hutesontown town and Clydebank branches, and the Lancashire Division for the Unity Group. The September 1933 issue of *Labour's Northern Voice* announced that 'Lancashire ILP Says "No" Because it believes in a Real United Front'. It maintained that the RPC and the London Division wanted the absorption of the ILP into the communist party and that the real need was to organise and use 'all the organs of the workers, including Parliament' and to develop class-consciousness at the point of production.

Lancashire stood firm as it rejected the decisions taken at the Derby Conference at its Divisional Conference in January 1934. In a variety of polls, Sandham's report to the NAC advocating for parliamentary activity was accepted, the condemnation of Lancashire's divisional officers rejected, and a call to revert back to the ILP policy before the Derby Conference passed by a vote of 21 to 16.⁸⁷ There was also a call for the ILP to return to the old reformist Second International in the hope that this would provide the basis of an all-inclusive international. Murry, writing in his own journal, the *Adelphi*, supported the Lancashire stand, maintaining the need for parliamentary activity, attacking the United Front policy and insisting on creating workers' councils. As already indicated, Murry's revolutionary socialism required the use of parliamentary tactics and sought to ensure that the Labour Party would go into the next general election with a real socialist policy. The NAC questionnaire drawn up by Brockway and Campbell Stephen, and already referred to, endorsed the impression of widespread support for Unity views, revealing that Yorkshire, East Anglia and Wales had majorities

of respondents opposed to continuing to work with the communists (Appendix 3) and that the London branches had voted 13 to 11 against continuing to co-operate with the communist party, although there was a narrow majority of 96 to 92 for a United Front policy. The Stapleford & Sandiacre and New Ferry branches also wanted 'disciplinary action against the RPC'.⁸⁸

The ILP Conference at York in 1934 was the final straw, as already suggested, because it offered little prospect of agreement and the basic conflicts were played out in repetitive form. Both Murry's Norwich branch resolution in favour of parliamentary action, and the RPC's demand for united action through the worker's council had been defeated.⁸⁹ The Conference merely confirmed the sharp differences that existed between those areas supporting cooperation with the communist party and those only wishing limited contact. As already indicated, the NAC merely reaffirmed the advice given by Brockway, in response to the survey of ILP branch opinion that had been conducted, that 'the national cooperation be based upon specific objects as agreed upon by representatives of the two parties from time to time'.⁹⁰ In other words, the York Conference had clarified little and merely frustrated the Unity Group – condemning the Lancashire Divisional Council's attitudes to the United Front, and other related matters, by a vote of 135 to 31, and rejected its ethical socialist policy by 101 votes to 61.⁹¹

An impasse had been reached and, although it is clear that the RPC was not able to dominate the ILP and would eventually leave at the end of 1935, there was concern that the Lancashire Division and the supporters of parliamentary action would leave the Party and possibly join the Socialist League.⁹² The situation was exacerbated by the fact that Sandham was removed from the parliamentary list of candidates, the Liverpool Federation removing his candidature of the Kirkwood seat, much to the chagrin of *Labour's Northern Voice*.⁹³ The NAC sent Campbell Stephens to talk to the Lancashire Division but such efforts came too late, and Tom Abbott, a long-serving member of the ILP and the Lancashire Divisional Organiser, resigned from the ILP, as did Samuel Higgenbotham, editor of *Labour's Northern Voice*. Murry, of Norwich, also resigned at this point. These leaders of the Unity Group called a conference on 13 May 1934, at which they formed the Independent Socialist Party (ISP). The new party accepted the need for revolutionary change to socialism but only with 'the democratic assent of the majority of the people'.⁹⁴ Sandham resigned from the ILP a month later and joined the ISP, becoming Chairman at the end of September 1934, with Abbott as General Secretary.⁹⁵

By now *Labour's Northern Voice* had effectively moved to the ISP and, with the support of older established figures of the ILP, such as Katherine Bruce Glasier, was advocating democracy in the face of the move towards a United Front with the Third International, which was seen to be inimical to the traditions of the ILP. Brockway, at an IE meeting with communist party representatives, was also becoming increasingly concerned that ILPers being advised by Harry Pollitt, General Secretary of the CPGB, to remain within the ILP to establish the unification of the two parties, was a ploy perhaps also designed to stop becoming a centre of Trotskyist opposition to Stalinism in the emerging conflict within international

Marxism.⁹⁶ Yet, Trotskyites did emerge in the Party, the RPC did not get the ILP to join the Third International and RPC left for the CPGB.

The Soviet model of democratic centralism was never to dominate the ILP, despite the fact that the old loose semi-autonomous arrangement of the NAC was now giving way to a more centralised form of control with the formation of the IE. It was also the case that the *New Leader* changed its format and became, increasingly, an agency for propaganda rather debate under Brockway's editorship.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, it is clear that Maxton and Brockway, and a group wishing to bring about revolutionary socialism through a workers' council, possibly via a general strike, but unwilling to entirely give up parliamentary politics was maintaining control of the Party.

Conclusion

The ILP declined rapidly after disaffiliation in 1932, though that decline was uneven. There was an almost immediate collapse of support in the textile district of the West Riding of Yorkshire and Bradford, its birthplace, whilst some expansion of support occurred in districts such as Derby and Nottingham. Indeed, about a third of the membership had left within the first year of disaffiliation. The problem, of course, was that ILP members, councillors and MPs had to choose between the ILP and the Labour Party. By 1934 the membership of the ILP had fallen even further to about a quarter of its immediate pre-disaffiliation level. This haemorrhaging of around 7,000 members amongst the ILP between 1933 and 1935, of those who remained in 1932, reflected the intractable conflict that occurred over the development of a new revolutionary policy for the ILP. It was never entirely clear what this policy was, and different groups within the ILP interpreted it in different ways. To the RPC the new policy agreed upon at the Derby Conference of 1933 was about revolutionary change through workers' councils and with possible bloodshed, which meant that the ILP should join the Third International. However, the RPC left in 1935 when it appeared that this was not going to become an option and when Trotskyists seemed to be growing. The Guild of Youth, an ancillary organisation to the ILP became infected by communism, and many of its members drifted out of the Party at much the same time.⁹⁸ Yet to other members, perhaps even a majority as suggested by one survey, there was a feeling that parliamentary activity would remain a part of the ILP's tools to bring about revolutionary socialism. When the parliamentary option seemed in doubt, its key figures and supporters left the ILP, and these included Paton, Murry, Sandham and the Lancashire-based Unity Group, which formed the ISP in 1934. To Maxton, Brockway and others the revolutionary policy was about retaining all options to achieve change, playing down 'bloody' revolution and retaining independence from communist control and the democratic centralism of the Third International. In the end, in order to ensure their position, the ILP, Maxton and Brockway had helped create an Executive Committee and IE structure at the York Conference of 1934, though the centralisation it brought in decision-making within the ILP helped them to control the Party was never the full-blown democratic centralism

of the CPGB and the Third International. With apologies to Dowse, by the end of 1935 the ILP was merely the centre that was left. Revolutionary policy was to remain its policy until the Second World War and was offered as an effective alternative to 'Socialism in Our Time'. Yet it was a much-diminished party, where the leadership used its control of the centre to manipulate the ILP's policy on the many controversial international issues that emerged in the second half of the 1930s – though to be further divided by the Abyssinian crisis, the Spanish Civil War and the build-up to the Second World War.

Notes

- 1 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, pp. 31, 33.
- 2 JSM/ILP/17, James Smith Middleton Papers, letter from Hugh Dalton to Middleton, 8 February 1935.
- 3 People's History Museum, Labour History Archive and Study Centre letter collection, letter from G. R. Smith to Councillor Crowe, 1 August 1932.
- 4 Working Class Movement Library, Salford, letter from E. Smith to Mr. J. P. Butterworth, Secretary, Wakefield Labour Party, 9 August 1932.
- 5 *The Times*, 6 August 1932.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 29 August 1932.
- 7 Stevens, 'Rapid Demise or Slow Death?'.
- 8 *The Times*, 5 August 1932.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 29 August 1932.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 1 August 1932.
- 11 *Bradford Pioneer*, 5, 12, 26 August and 9 September 1932.
- 12 *The Times*, 2 August 1932.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 3 October 1932.
- 14 *Bradford Pioneer*, 12 August 1930, 30 September 1932.
- 15 Knox and MacKinlay, 'Remaking of Scottish Labour', p. 193.
- 16 *The Times*, 29 August 1932.
- 17 Knox and MacKinlay, 'Remaking of Scottish Labour', p. 176.
- 18 *The Times*, 17 August 1932. The report indicates also that the disaffiliationists intended to stand 18 candidates for the November city council elections.
- 19 *Glasgow Herald*, 20 August 1932; *The Times*, 16 August 1932.
- 20 Labour Party Archive, People's History Museum, LP/ILP, 32/1, cutting from the *Daily Record and Mail*, 26 August 1932.
- 21 Minutes of the Bo'ness ILP, 26 August and 11 September 1932; Arthur Woodburn, 'Some recollections (draft autobiography)', National Library of Scotland, ACC 7656, Box 4, file 1, p. 68. Woodburn, writing in *Forward*, 10 September 1932, stated that 'Until 1932, the Labour Party in Scotland was a shell organization, power and influence residing with the ILP'.
- 22 Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*.
- 23 *The Times*, 3 October 1932.
- 24 James Jupp, *The Radical Left in Britain 1931–1941*, London, Routledge, 1982, p. 39.
- 25 NAC Minutes, Confidential Report on Affiliation Fees to the Party for February each year, 1931–1938; NAC Minutes, 30 July to 1 August 1938.
- 26 *The Report of the Annual Conference held at Gloucester, April 1925*, London, ILP, 1925, p. 7.
- 27 *Report of the NAC, 1922* (Nottingham), p. 3; *Report of the NAC, 1929*, p. 4; *Report of the NAC, 1931*, p. 9; *Report of the NAC, 1932*, p. 18; Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, p. 33.

- 28 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, pp. 31, 33.
- 29 NAC Minutes, Confidential Report on Affiliation Fees to the Party for February each year, 1931–1938; NAC Minutes, 30 July to 1 August 1938.
- 30 Working Class Movement Library, Salford, letters, 'Draft Statement of Policy (H. L. Gearing), for the 1933 ILP Annual Conference at Derby.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 The Independent Socialist Party (ISP) was formed by Elijah Sandham, a former ILP and Chairman of the Lancashire Division of the ILP, and Tom Abbott, a former Lancashire organiser of the Party. Supported by John Middleton Murry, and his *Adelphi* magazine, it was resolutely anti-war and anti-communist. Some of its branches re-joined the Labour Party during the Second World War; its founders died in 1944 and 1949, and it was wound up in the 1950s.
- 33 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 81–2; There is an incomplete set of the ILP Revolutionary Policy Committee's Bulletin in CP/IND/MISC/17/07.
- 34 Carl Knight Cullen, *Memorandum on the Present Political and Economic Situation of the ILP*, London, author, ILP.
- 35 Summary of discussion at meeting of Divisional Representatives with the NAC held in the Labour Hall, Blackpool, on Friday March 25th, 1932, A. F. Brockway presiding; *New Leader*, 19 August 1932.
- 36 John Middleton Murry, *The Necessity of Communism*, London and Toronto, Jonathan Cape, 1932; Bullock, *Under Siege*, pp. 206–12.
- 37 Ibid., pp. 120–2; *New Leader*, 2 September 1932.
- 38 'Memorandum on organisation of the new ILP', Middleton Murry Papers, MS 2808, University of Edinburgh Special Collections, 15b, 1–7, 11.
- 39 *New Leader*, 6 April 1934.
- 40 Paton, *Left Turn*, pp. 393–400.
- 41 Bullock, *Under Siege*, p. 223.
- 42 Minutes of the Consultative Committee of the NAC held on Thursday March 30th 1933, in the House of Commons; NAC Minutes, 14–15 April 1933.
- 43 *NAC Report, Constitution and Rules of the ILP together with a Statement on the Place of Parliamentary Activities in the Policy of the Party. As adopted at the Derby Conference, April 1933*, London, ILP, 1933, p. 6.
- 44 Fenner Brockway, 'The Next Step, Towards Working Class Unity', *Chairman's speech ILP Conference, Derby*, London, ILP, 1933, pp. 3–5.
- 45 *Report of the Annual Conference [ILP] held at Derby, April 1933*, p. 18.
- 46 Bullock, *Under Siege*, pp. 220–4.
- 47 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 86–7.
- 48 Ibid., p. 12; *New Leader*, 21 April 1933; *RPC Monthly Bulletin*, No. 9, May 1933, pp. 1 and 5.
- 49 *New Leader*, 5 May 1933.
- 50 *The Adelphi*, June 1933, Vol. 6, No. 3, 'Political Note', p. 208.
- 51 NAC Minutes, 18 April 1933; *New Leader*, 21 April 1934; Bullock, *Under Siege*, p. 222.
- 52 *New Leader*, 19 May 1933.
- 53 Ibid., 16 and 23 June 1933.
- 54 NAC Minutes, 24–25 June 1933.
- 55 Ibid., 24–25 June 1933.
- 56 Val Wood, *Florence Paton MP 1891–1976*, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Labour History Society, Occasional Pamphlet 6 (March 2019), particularly pp. 9–10.
- 57 Minutes of the Sub-Committee on General Policy, 1 and 2 July 1933; 'The Policy of the ILP', Paton's Minority report, 28 July 1933, and his statement on Party Policy and Brockway's statement.

- 58 'A Clear Lead' by James Maxton and Fenner Brockway, London, ILP, 1933, p. 13.
- 59 Paul Flowers, *The New Civilisation? Understanding Stalin's Soviet Union 1929–1941*, London, Francis Boutle, 2009. Also Miss W. Redman's account of a tour of 16 people, including herself, an MP, a Bolton Mill Girl, technical experts, and others, to the Soviet Union in 1932, which outlines Russian history and the experience of going to Russia by sea and by train and experiencing the deprivation of the country and its new more egalitarian values.
- 60 *ILP Annual Report 1933*, p. 16.
- 61 *Controversy*, June 1934.
- 62 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, pp. 127–8.
- 63 NAC Minutes, 10–11 February 1934.
- 64 *New Leader*, 6 April 1934.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 6 April 1934.
- 66 NAC Minutes, 10–11 February 1934; Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, p. 143.
- 67 *New Leader*, 25 May 1934.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 25 May 1934; Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, p. 146.
- 69 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, pp. 146–8.
- 70 There is much correspondence between Lewes Povey and William Spence in the Young Communist League archives, in ILP Guild of Youth. Also look at the CPGB Archive of the Young Communist League LHASC, 13–934, CP/YCL/18/7 and CP/YCL/18/4, reference to ILPGPY, Youth Unity Militant Organ of the Guild of Youth' and Scottish version.
- 71 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, p. 48.
- 72 *Ibid.*, pp. 81–95.
- 73 *A Socialist Party for Britain: Statement to be submitted by the National Administrative Council of the ILP to the Annual Conference of the Party, to be held at the Keir Hardie Hall, Derby, April 20 to 23rd, 1935*, London, ILP, 1935.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 3 on 'Capitalism and the Soviet Union' and p. 4 on 'The Working Class Movement in Britain', and p. 5.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 76 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 77 *Daily Worker*, 24 April 1935; *New Leader*, 3 May 1935.
- 78 *New Leader*, 11 October 1935.
- 79 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, p. 131.
- 80 Leon Trotsky, *The ILP and the Fourth International: In the Middle of the Road: A pamphlet on the writings of Trotsky. Articles published here follow the texts of the issue of the New International of December 1935, February 1936 and June 1936*.
- 81 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 82 *Ibid.*
- 83 *New Leader*, 19 August, 30 September 1932.
- 84 *Labour's Northern Voice*, June and July 1933.
- 85 *Ibid.*, August 1933.
- 86 *Forward*, 22 July 1933; NAC Minutes 5, 6 and 7 August 1933.
- 87 *New Leader*, 2 February 1934.
- 88 NAC Minutes, 6–7 January 1934 and 10–11 February 1934.
- 89 *ILP Annual Report 1934*, p. 316.
- 90 *Decisions of the 42nd Annual Conference together with the statement of the ILP policy endorsed at the Conference Held 31 March–3 April 1934 in York*, ILP, 1934, pp. 4–5, 13.
- 91 ILP Annual Easter Conference (York), 1934.
- 92 *New Leader*, 20 April 1934.
- 93 *Ibid.*, 6 April 1934 and *Labour's Northern Voice*, April 1934.
- 94 *Labour's Northern Voice*, June 1934.

- 95 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, p. 101; Bullock, *Under Siege*, pp. 332–3.
- 96 Report of the Inner Executive with representatives of the Communist Party, 12 December 1934; NAC Minutes 9–10 June 1934; *The London RPC Bulletin*, No. 13, June 1934,
- 97 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 101.
- 98 The archives in the Communist Party records at the People's History Museum, Manchester are far more explicit about the Guild of Youth and Communist entryism into the ILP than the records of the ILP stored in their multiple collections.

6 A mass of contradictions

Internationals, communism, the Labour Party and war

Paul Flowers and Kevin Morgan have emphasised that British socialists, including the Webbs, were infatuated with Stalin's Russia, even if many became alarmed at the events they witnessed.¹ Despite many misgivings, members of the ILP often drew the distinction between the Russian people and Stalin's state communism, in their continued admiration for the Soviet Union. Brockway praised the Russian working class but condemned the Soviet Union and also the 'rigidity of mind and method of the British Communist Party' which made it incapable of adapting to the British situation: 'It speaks of a united front of revolutionary Socialists only to destroy it in practice'.² Brockway's criticisms of communism were undoubtedly derived from the difficulties faced in negotiating with the Third International in the early 1920s when it became clear that that ILP would not have the freedom of expression it desired if it affiliated to the Third International. Despite such qualms, after disaffiliating to the Labour Party in 1932 there remained some hopes that the ILP could affiliate to the Third International, though the lack of freedom of thought and action it would have been afforded, along with the Abyssinian crisis and the Spanish Civil War, ended those prospects and ultimately threw the ILP back into considering a possible re-affiliation to the Labour Party on the eve of war of the Second World War. Arising from these developments in the turbulent politics of the ILP of the 1930s, aside the ongoing internal conflict between parliamentary politics and workers' revolutionary policy, were at least three prevailing ILP commitments, which were almost shibboleths. These were the maintenance of the ILP's political independence, the bringing about of revolutionary change through the unity of action by a workers' front, and the commitment to ensuring peace in the face of capitalist and imperialistic-driven wars. Given the pluralism of the ILP membership, none of these commitments went without challenge and bitter internecine debate. By the end of the 1930s, however, whilst independence was maintained and revolutionary change constantly asserted, the commitment to peace was subject to suspension in a complex fragmentation of ideas which saw the Abyssinian crisis and the Spanish Civil War divide the ILP over fighting a socialist war as opposed to one driven by capitalism. This rather challenges the accepted view of the ILP as a pacifist party, an image it first falsely gained in the Great War. However, by the end of the 1930s the national and international conflicts the ILP faced had

made it a small, insignificant social democratic party whose freedom of thought meant that it was deeply divided on most issues.

The Third International

Until the end of 1935, when they left the ILP, the RPC, Dr. C. K. Cullen and Jack Gaster were clearly committed to getting the ILP to work with the CPGB and the Third International. In March 1930, the London Division of the ILP had agreed to a statement with the CPGB supporting a London united front in support of the German workers against fascism. This had been drawn up on 23 March 1930 at a meeting attended by Cullen, Gaster, Warbey and Aplin in conjunction with the representatives of the London CPGB, including Frank Springhall. After much discussion, in which Gaster felt that there should be no undermining of the British anti-war movement and its meetings, it was decided that there would be a demonstration of unity in demonstrations building up to an anti-war event in Trafalgar Square on May Day, and that delegates of the ILP, the CPGB and the Anti-War Movement would go to the International Conference in Copenhagen.³ Fred Jowett, despite his democratic and parliamentary priorities, was also a fervent and uncritical admirer of the Soviet Union and expressed similar hopes.⁴ Indeed, throughout the 1920s there had been admiration for Lenin, the NAC Report to the ILP's 1924 Conference acknowledging his greatness in the history of the socialist movement.⁵ G. W. Dillon, a member of the ILP and of the National Union of Foundry Workers' Executive Committee, wrote a series of admiring articles in *Labour's Northern Voice* in 1928, under the title of 'What I Saw in Russia'.⁶ Nevertheless, there were always stern critics of the Soviet Union and the CPGB within the ILP. Dr. Alfred Salter did not like the 'suppression of opposing criticism and the disregard for democracy' of the Bolsheviks, but he left the ILP in 1932. Brockway remained a constant critic, and Philip Snowden may well have left the ILP partly because of his wife's [Ethel] criticism of the Soviet Union in her books, *Through Bolshevik Russia*.⁷

The relations between the ILP, the CPGB and the Third International remained uneasy during the 1920s and, in 1929, Maxton was expelled from the communist-dominated League Against Imperialism, an action taken as evidence of the failure of communist propaganda in Britain.⁸ This antipathy changed little when the ILP was criticised for remaining within the Labour Party by the CPGB at the time when the Third International's 'Class Against Class' policy of 1928 to 1933 was active and resulted in the CPGB standing communist candidates against Labour Party and ILP candidates in both the 1929 and 1931 general elections. There was similar unease when the Third International and the CPGB swung in the opposite direction and were advocating both their United Front (1933–1935) and Popular Front (1935–1939) policies to unite socialists against fascism, and criticising the ILP for not being within the Labour Party. Times and policies had changed, but unease and antipathy remained.

These tensions were exacerbated by the fact that, as in the early 1920s, the ILP was seeking to establish a wider framework for international socialism which

would unite revolutionary and democratic socialist parties. This had failed in the early 1920s, and the Vienna Union, which the ILP supported, joined with the Second International in 1923 to form the Labour and Socialist International (LSI) in rivalry to the Third International. In 1931 the ILP helped to form the International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity (IBRSU), with six other international organisations. The Left International Committee, as it was often known, faced a hectic history of comings and goings by national socialist groups, but it put the ILP into close contact with POUM, the Spanish Workers' Party of Marxist Unification, which the ILP contingent of volunteers joined during the Spanish Civil War. By 1935 the ILP was strongly involved with the IBRSU and, indeed, the organisation moved to London and was referred to as the 'London Bureau', where it remained until it removed to Paris in January/February 1939.⁹

Yet, the ILP and democratic socialist's love affair with the Soviet Union continued into the 1930s. Notwithstanding alternative interests, the ILP, through *Labour's Northern Voice*, *Forward*, and the *New Leader*, admired the Soviet Union and its economic Five-Year Plan, and the prospect of its introduction of participatory democratic socialism.¹⁰ Throughout 1932 the *New Leader* included a large number of 'New Russia Supplements', including 'The Soviet System Explained' in May and 'Russia is Wonderful. But Don't Be Expecting Too Much!' in June.¹¹ At the 1933 ILP Annual Conference both the Sheffield branch and the Edinburgh Federation pledged resistance to 'any attempt to strangle the progress of Soviet Russia', threatening a general strike.¹² The *New Leader* celebrated the seventeenth birthday of Soviet Russia in November 1934.¹³

The ILP, free from the crabbing and confining control of the Labour Party and with its new revolutionary policy emerging, was once again inclined towards some agreement with international communism. The 1933 ILP Conference instructed the NAC to negotiate with the Third International, and these began in 1933 and continued up to 1936, during which the dominating characteristic feature was the ILP's internecine sectarian controversy over revolutionary theory.¹⁴ A protracted debate over the 21 conditions imposed by the Third International for affiliation in 1920/1921 stumbled because the ILP wished to maintain its freedom to criticise the Third International and maintain its separate identity if it affiliated. Negotiations were not productive and were blown off course by the fact that Brockway became increasingly critical of both the Third International and Soviet foreign policy. Detecting changes in Russian foreign policy towards peace during the early 1930s, Brockway noted in his article, 'Workers Prepare: The Bankruptcy of the Internationals', in *New Leader* in May 1933, that the Soviet Union was resisting an international boycott of German goods, accepting of Japanese Imperialism in the Far East by agreeing to the Japanese control of Manchuria (Manchukuo) in 1931, and willing to cede the Chinese Eastern Railway to Japan.

The intractable correspondence between the ILP and the Third International began on 18 May 1933 when Paton, still Secretary of the ILP, sent it a letter suggesting that it could help the Third International organise a Special Conference.¹⁵ The ILP had at that time just left the Second International, having disaffiliated from the Labour Party, and was looking for another international socialist

alliance. Its overtures were immediately rebuffed by a letter from O. W. Kuusinen, Secretary of the Central Committee (Politburo) of the Third International, on 21 June, lecturing the ILP on its previous attempts to act in an 'unbiased manner' and to the fact that the ILP wrote 'articles hostile to the revolutionary working-class movement', a direct reference to Brockway's articles.¹⁶ Paton responded on 7 July 1933, suggesting that the Third International had pursued policies which had 'divided and wrecked the industrial organisation of workers' by suggesting that some sections 'as enemies indistinguishable from the Fascists', indeed were social fascists.¹⁷ Brockway also accepted the challenge of a debate on these matters with Harry Pollitt at London's Conway Hall in early July 1933.¹⁸ Kuusinen replied by attacking the actions of the ILP in 1920 and 1921, accusing it of wishing to set up a Left socialist arrangement that had eventually merged into the treacherous Second International in 1923, and condemned an article in the *New Leader* which had practically accused the Third International and the Soviet Union of acquiescing to Japanese Imperialism in Manchuria. In the end, he wrote that 'Bourgeois violence cannot be broken by "pacifist techniques"'.¹⁹ Paton and Brockway replied to such charges in two separate letters; the former protesting at what he saw as the misrepresentation of the ILP's effort to unite socialist organisations against fascism and Hitler, whilst the latter enquired about the 21 points raised of the ILP by the Third International in 1920–1921, and particularly about the principal obligations of the ILP within the Third International and whether or not there was a ground for flexibility.²⁰ Fuel was added to the fire when the ILP suggested that there needed to be a replacement of the CPSU control over the Third International by a 'real collective international body'.²¹ Matters worsened, particularly after a letter from Kuusinen, of The Political Secretariat of the ECCI, on 20 February 1934, which condemned Brockway's continuous criticism of the Soviet Union and implying that he associated with Trotsky's views. Brockway's reply, of 12 March 1934, merely emphasised that his views were those held by the NAC and were borne out by the history of the communist parties in Europe and America.²² Criticism, insult and the unbending wish of the ILP to preserve its tradition of independent thought and action, plus the constant intransigence of the Third International, were to ensure that the two organisations would never be able to work closely together, even in the age of the communist-inspired United Front Against Fascism, of 1933, or the Popular Front Against Fascism launched in 1935. Indeed, this was much the conclusion that the ever-prying MI5 and Special Branch analysts had reached in their surveillance reports in the 1930s.²³

Nevertheless, following the Annual Easter Conference held at York in 1934, where the RPC had gained some victories, the Affiliation Committee of the RPC, a body inspired by the CPGB to push the ILP forward to unconditional affiliation with the Third International, had sent Bob Edwards and Eric Whalley to the Soviet Union in May 1934 to discuss the 21 conditions and to raise 15 questions. On their return they produced a pamphlet entitled *Revolutionary Unity*, which presented the Third International's responses, many of which had been geared to the recent actions of the communist party in Germany. The seventh and eighth questions asked, in slightly different form, why had the Third International not supported

the German Social Democratic Party's campaign to boycott Germany after Hitler had risen to power? Additionally, the deputation asked about the failure of the USSR to sever trade ties with Hitler's Germany, noted the apparent willingness of the Soviet Union to sell its Chinese Eastern Railway to the Japanese, who had recently annexed Manchuria from China, and expressed concern that the Soviet Union had joined the 'warmongering' League of Nations. The thirteenth question was most prescient for the ILP's future and sought re-assurances, referred to in the responses in recent negotiations, that the ILP would retain its name. The fifteenth question asked about the response to the idea of 'the sympathetic affiliation' of the ILP to the Third International.

The detailed replies of the Third International were uncompromising and focused upon the need for the uncritical acceptance of Stalin's commitment to peace, the difficulties of the German Communist Party, and the fact that times had changed with the withdrawal of Germany and France from the League of Nations. In the end the Third International felt that Social Democrats were 'social fascists' because they supported the existing bourgeoisie and that the British government, under Ramsay MacDonald, which had bombed an Indian village, were reformists:

But even in Britain the Reformist leaders are going along the same social-fascist road as the Social-Democratic leaders in Germany, owing to their policy of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie, the hounding out of revolutionary elements, the destruction of the united front of workers. This again does not refer to the workers who follow the Reformist leaders, it does not refer to the masses of the members of the Labour Party and the Trade Unions.²⁴

Third International officials denied that they were trying to divide the British trade union movement or to dismiss the work of the rank and file but had found the leadership of reformist organisations unaware of the revolutionary potential of the working class and their leaders responsible for slanderous attacks upon the Third International. It was confirmed that the ILP could keep its name, but Brockway, in particular, was cited as a font of slander and intrigue in laying down the conditions upon which the ILP could affiliate as a sympathetic supporter to the Third International.²⁵ Indeed, the 'sympathetic affiliation of the ILP' was subject to a diatribe which emphasised that the mutual and voluntary support of the ILP was needed for the Third International's belief in the attack upon the bourgeoisie by revolutionary, not peaceful means, and that these tactics had to replace the left-Reform line of 'the leaders of the ILP headed by Brockway, and the ILP will have to reject one line and accept the other'.²⁶ They further added that

The leaders of your National Administrative, Brockway and others, discredited elements as Trotsky and Lovestone. Your leaders come out in words against the proposal which is unpopular among the members of the ILP, to create an IVth International. But by their collaboration with these elements, Brockway and the other leaders of the ILP are, in practice, helping to attempt to form a IVth International.²⁷

This was far from promising and the verbal conflict was fuelled further by Brockway arguing that Russian foreign policy was now driven by the need to draw in the support of Britain, France and other capitalist countries in order to stave off the threat of Germany, and that this was evident in the Soviet Union joining the League of Nations in September 1934. Brockway sustained this view in an article entitled 'Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy: An Issue Socialists Must Face' in the *New Leader* in November 1934, in which he argued that now Russia was a member of the League of Nations, and it had accepted the collective system of peace-keeping and was not prepared to act according to its revolutionary principles.

In December 1934 the Inner Executive of the ILP reported a complaint from Gaster, of the RPC, against Brockway's anti-Russian stance, but still, in its April meeting, rejected a motion from the RPC-dominated London division which protested against the editor's article on the diplomacy of the Soviet Union on the grounds that it was in line with ILP policy.²⁸ Nevertheless, despite such political eddies, the negotiations between the ILP and the Third International lumbered on. The initial signs were encouraging and, as already indicated, the RPC had set up the 'ILP Committee for Affiliation to the Comintern' and requested that its supportive views be circulated to the branches. Relations between the ILP and the communists seem to have picked up when Brockway, Maxton, for the ILP, and Harry Pollitt and Willie Gallacher, of the CPGB, met in the House of Commons on 12 April 1935 to discuss co-operation with the trade unions, the co-ordination of electoral actions, and working with the NUWM and other organisations. The main purpose seems to have been for Pollitt to present the NUWM as 'a non-Party organisation' with which the CPGB and the ILP should work to 'build up the NUWM to remove all traces of sectarianism'.²⁹ Given the communist origins of the NUWM, this seems a somewhat disingenuous suggestion. Yet to the ILP this was one of many alternative political arrangements it was considering for, as already established, it was also looking to the possibility of forming an alternative grouping of left-wing parties throughout Europe to establish socialist unity through the IBRSU/London Bureau. Brockway supported the idea of working with independent Revolutionary Parties to produce an all-embracing revolutionary international including the revolutionary parties of the Socialist International, the independent revolutionary socialist parties, and the Third International, and emphasising that the last of these needed to be present, even though it showed little chance of reform.³⁰ The ILP also republished for the 1935 Annual Conference, Conference document 2, *A Socialist Policy for Britain* (1935), which reiterated where the Party stood and its objectives. It indicated its aim to work with the executives of trade unions to more effectively represent the working class in Britain, to offer an alternative to this in respect to the Labour Party and to oppose fascism and Imperialism. However, its main object was to foster unity by working with 'advanced' workers in the Labour Party, trade unions and the co-operative movement, whilst stressing that the differences in policies, tactics and organisation would make it almost impossible for the ILP and the communists to unite. Indeed, it argued, that if this occurred it would have 'divisive rather than unifying

results. The united Revolutionary Socialist Party will result from the growth of a common policy and organisational base through united action in Britain and from the unifying of the Revolutionary Movement in the International field'.³¹

Such views were obviously not acceptable to the Third International and from within the ILP and was immediately rejected by the RPC in the *London RPC Bulletin*. It felt that the social democratic participants were not genuinely revolutionary and that there could be no unity between the Third International, Trotskyists and other revolutionary sections and parties.³² Indeed, Brockway's hopes for international socialist unity were further dashed when it became quite clear that the Third International would not be inviting the ILP to its Seventh World Congress, in July and August 1935, where the Popular Front against fascism was launched in an attempt to broaden to attract non-socialist parties into the campaign against fascism. Given that this was the moment at which the Third International gave up the idea of world revolution, this decision seems odd and contradictory.³³ Not surprisingly, the tensions continued between Brockway and the RPC as Brockway continued to attack Soviet foreign policy and as his *New Leader* denied the RPC the opportunity to air their opposing views.³⁴ Relations between the ILP and national and international communism worsened and harmed the prospects for international socialist unity. John McGovern perhaps best represented the position of the ILP in January 1936 when he wrote of the incompatibility of the policies of the ILP and the communist party and defined the independent policy of the ILP.

The ILP stood for the carrying out of a working-class revolutionary socialist policy, and will not be deterred by either the Labour Party Standing Orders or Communist Internationalism. We are prepared to co-operate with any individual or party prepared to travel that road, but our independence as a party must be recognised. The Communist Party members have no freedom to decide on issues. We retain our right as a democratic organisation and intend to defend this against all comers.³⁵

Division within disunity: Abyssinia and the ILP's 1936 annual conference

The internal tensions within the ILP were exacerbated further by the threat and invasion of Abyssinia by Italy in 1935. Maxton and Brockway, the Chairman and the General Secretary, respectively, opposed each other on this event, with Gaster and Cullen similarly divided in the RPC. Indeed, the war in Abyssinia divided the ILP into three main groups. Maxton led one group that consisted of the Inner Executive [IE], dominated by the small Parliamentary Group, which suggested that the Abyssinian war was one between the two dictators, Benito Mussolini and Haile Selassie, and wanted a demonstration for the working class of Britain to show 'their determination that they are not going into another blood bath under the false cry of a small defenceless nation', referring to Belgium and the Great War.³⁶ Shortly afterwards, the IE had the NAC publish a manifesto calling for the working class to campaign against the National Government 'imposing sanctions

or waging War for British Capitalism and Imperialism!³⁷ This commitment to neutrality initially drew some support from the RPC, Bert Matlow of the Trotskyists and many pacifists, as did the condemnation of the National Government's reported attempt to appease Italy with an offer of half of Abyssinia to settle the war.³⁸ However, the neutrality position was soon to be challenged by two other groupings.³⁹ One, led by Brockway, supported the defence of Abyssinia and advocated 'workers' sanctions against Italy. The *New Leader* published articles on 'Stop the Slaughter', and 'How to Stop the War: Support the ILP', which broadly proposed this line.⁴⁰ This position drew support from Jack Gaster of the RPC. The other group, led by Cullen, and supported by the majority of the RPC, supported the Third International and CPGB position which favoured sanctions against Italy supported by Soviet Russia, which was now a member of the League of Nations.

These three positions of neutrality, workers' sanctions, and sanctions by the League of Nations, cut across the normal alignments within the ILP and particularly split the RPC where Cullen supported action by the League of Nations and Gaster, initially adopting neutrality in the war, sought workers' action against Italy separately from that of the League of Nations. This led to further internecine conflict within in the ILP, and Cullen's opposition to the official line of neutrality led to him being removed from the National Speakers list of the ILP by the IE, this intensifying the divisions in the ILP.

The divisions within the RPC over what action to take over Abyssinia also came to a head in the 1935 Summer Divisional Conference of the London and Southern Counties ILP, where Gaster and a small coterie of RPC members, and John Aplin (the London Divisional organiser) advocated workers' action. Embarrassingly they were joined by Trotskyists from the Marxist Group, who were active in the ILP, most notably by C. L. R. James, the chairman of the Finchley ILP branch.⁴¹ Together they ensured that the Conference ignored neutrality, supported workers' action and rejected the idea of support for the League of Nations, by a vote of about five to one.⁴² It was clear that the leadership of the RPC could no longer dominate the London Division of the ILP as it had once done, and as a result of Brockway's influence, the *New Leader* allowed James to write an article attacking the League of Nations for being part of an imperialistic plot against Abyssinia, further fuelling the conflict with Cullen and the majority of the RPC at a time when the tensions between Stalinism and Trotskyism were rising.⁴³

In the meantime, the IE of the Executive Committee of the NAC persisted with its neutral line and, in September 1935, reported that the ILP membership was overwhelmingly opposed to both war and sanctions, which meant that the views of both the Brockway and the RPC at that time were being rejected.⁴⁴ This was a highly contentious statement for the ILP membership, who remained deeply divided about the Abyssinian crisis. Indeed, the Yorkshire Division, and Sheffield and Hull branches, rejected the IE/Parliamentary Group official neutrality stance on Abyssinia, whilst the Midlands branches supported its position.⁴⁵ However, the issue seemed to be one of Maxton and the IE against the rest, which led to some difficult and embattled relations. Indeed, conflict ensued at the NAC meeting of 9 October 1935 when the ILP policy came under greater scrutiny. Gaster

and Brockway were two of only four who voted for a motion to support Abyssinian opposition to Italian aggression by workers' action. The other nine, including Maxton, voted against this motion and ensured that the 'official line' of the ILP was one of neutrality in the war between 'two dictators'. Indeed, the NAC reasserted its criticism the actions of the Labour Party, the TUC and the CPGB for demanding sanctions by the League of Nations.

In response, the RPC reiterated its belief in sanctions by the League of Nations and an Emergency Committee of Aplin, Cullen, Gaster, Bert Matlow (of the Marxist Group) and Hilda Vernon approved Gaster's attack on the Maxton 'two dictators' neutrality.⁴⁶ The RPC remained loyal to action by the League of Nations, given Cullen's commitment to the position of the Soviet Union, and advertised the fact in the October 1935 issue of the *RPC Bulletin*. It was overwhelmingly opposed to the 'official ILP line', complaining that it was throwing doubt on 'the honest endeavour of the Soviet Government to check Italian aggression and preserve world peace'.⁴⁷ Cullen, and the majority of the RPC, supported action by the League of Nations, whilst Jack Gaster and Hilda Vernon, in their 'The War Situation – and the League', article felt that the League of Nations was finished and a failure and thus that the Soviet action was irrelevant. These tensions came to a boil after the October Conference of the London Division and, commanding no majority, the RPC walked out and demanded that all revolutionary socialists in the party 'make application to the Communist Party for membership'.⁴⁸ In November 1935 the *RPC Bulletin* indicated that it was ceasing publication and that the RPC was leaving the ILP.

Division over Abyssinia was clearly going to dominate the 1936 ILP Easter Annual Conference which was held at Keighley. Yet, the *New Leader* attempted to play down the problems that would occur by suggesting that 'The ILP would resist any war under a Capitalist Government, carrying on the class struggle in war-time, or peace-time, preparing the situation to end war by social revolution', though it did admit that 'there will be a clash of opinions at the conference about the application of policy to the Italy-Abyssinia conflict', outlining the differences that exist.⁴⁹

The NAC report to the 1936 Annual Conference discussed letters sent to other organisations explaining the ILP position, and an appendix providing the text of a resolution of the IBRSU of August 1935 which supported the idea of 'workers' sanctions' rather than the official 'rival dictators' line of Maxton and the IE of the ILP. In the Conference, Brockway favoured advocating workers' sanctions, supported by Jones of Lancashire and John Aplin of London, but was attacked by C. L. R. James, who felt that the ILP had actually done nothing on Abyssinia.⁵⁰ C. A. Smith, of the London Division of the ILP, added that the conflict of views meant that 'the Party did not control the Group', referring to the three ILP members of the Parliamentary Group who controlled the IE. On the Sunday morning of the conference, a resolution, carried by 70 votes to 57, rejected the declaration of the IE (and references backed by 66 to 65), thus rejecting the neutrality position and with it the IE's attempt to impose the new democratic centralism on the Party. The Keighley Conference, on the one hand, and IE/ Parliamentary Group, on the other,

were clearly at odds and the resolution did not go unchallenged, for the next day the IE rebelled in its desire to regain power.⁵¹

Maxton made a statement from the chair about the IE opposition to the capitalist and imperialist war but argued that there was a difference on 'working class action against Italy' and then declared that the Chairman and three members of the IE were calling for a 'ballot vote', a plebiscite of all the members within three months. The IE was clearly unable to support the decision made at the Conference on the previous day. In the meantime Maxton and the IE asked for a 'liberty of expression of different views', to which the Conference agreed by 93 votes to 39.⁵² Brockway, through the *New Leader*, explained that he had agreed to the vote largely to avoid the resignation of the whole Parliamentary Groups and Maxton, although the plebiscite had also been strongly opposed by C. A. Smith from the London Division.⁵³ Thereafter, there were many other political eddies; the Larkhill branch attacked the IE, the Parliamentary Groups and also the NAC for not accepting the Conference decision, and there were debates over what precisely would be asked on the plebiscite. Maxton, McGovern and Southall advocated neutrality over Abyssinia, whilst Brockway, James and Edwards advocated 'workers' sanctions' in this fluid situation.⁵⁴

The plebiscite was conducted in May, after the Abyssinian crisis had ended with the abdication of Haile Selassie. It asked two questions. The first one asked whether the ILP should have 'declared against Italy and in favour of Abyssinia by the refusal of war materials to Italy'? The second asked whether or not the Party should 'have refused to back either Italy or Abyssinia and opposed the sending of war materials to either side'. The questions proved immensely controversial. The Ilford, Gateshead and Watford branches returned the ballot papers unmarked because it did not allow the expression of support for workers' sanctions.⁵⁵ In contrast, the Ferryngden branch offered a supportive resolution to the NAC. There were other protests about the ballot paper and its wording.⁵⁶ A few days later the NAC reported that 24 branches and many Guild of Youth branches had protested about the form of questions, though the Dundee branch merely hoped that the need for Party unity would override other issues.⁵⁷

Deprived of the views of opponents, the plebiscite simply endorsed the position of Maxton, the IE and the Parliamentary Group, rather than the Conference, in advocating neutrality, although the precise voting pattern was never presented to the ILP branches or even written into the NAC Report to the 1937 ILP Conference at Glasgow.⁵⁸ In total, 3,751 ballot papers were sent out and 1,442 returned, of which 18 were spoiled. On the first question, 734 voted No (52 per cent) and 576 (40 per cent) voted Yes. On the second question, the vote was 809 (56 per cent) Yes and (38 per cent) No. Yet 462 votes (32 per cent) gave support for workers' sanctions.⁵⁹ However, the matter did not rest there. Maxton, the Parliamentary Group, and the IE leadership were soon challenged, for at the ILP Annual Conference of 1937 the NAC referred to the need to defend 'subject people' against 'Imperialistic Government' and supported the principle of workers' sanctions.⁶⁰ In the end, it was clear that the attempted democratic centralism of the IE, designed to impose central control, did not fit the attitudes of the independent-minded

remnant membership of the Party.⁶¹ The plebiscite was essentially a means of keeping the Parliamentary Group and the IE within the ILP, and there was strong resentment against it from many branches who refused to vote.

The fact is that the ILP was divided into numerous groups, even after the departure of some to the Socialist League, the ISP and RPC and Trotskyist organisations by 1936. By then what was left was a small party made up largely of traditional democratic parliamentary supporters operating within a party which claimed some type of revolutionary policy based upon workers' action, led by Jimmy Maxton and a small Parliamentary Group which was often in conflict with the NAC and Conference. It was by now just one of several socialist parties which were effete as political forces within British politics. The onset of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 did little to change that position, although it led to further disillusionment with the Soviet Union and the end of any attempts to affiliate to the Third International.

Spain, the Moscow Show Trials and the impact upon the ILP

By 1936 the ILP was increasingly concerned about the actions of the Soviet Union and its allies. First, it was alarmed at the Soviet attacks upon Trotsky and those who rejected Stalinist state communism, and the ostracisation of Trotskyist organisations, actions that threatened the ILP's vision of socialist unity. Secondly, there were the Moscow Show Trials and purges of 1936–1938, organised by Stalin, as part of his 'Great Terror'. At the start of these, in August 1936, Brockway published his article, 'Doubts Caused by the Moscow Trial', where he condemned Stalin's purges.⁶² In the same edition of *New Leader*, John McNair, of the ILP and the International Bureau, reported upon a third concern, the Spanish Civil War, following his reflections a week later with the article, 'What I Saw in Spain'.⁶³ McNair had gone to Spain in August 1936, taking with him the first £100 assistance from the ILP to the communist-dominated Republican government. At the time, he was Assistant Secretary to the IBRSU, an international which emphasised the need for workers' action. He argued, in the pamphlet, *In Spain Now!* that he had found that 'Workers Control Everything in Barcelona' but noted that this was a position challenged by the Spanish Communist Party and supported by the Soviet Union. His support was for the workers in Catalonia as opposed to the communist-dominated Republican government of Madrid.⁶⁴ The potential for conflict within international socialism was all too evident. All three of the ILP's concerns were conflated and fought against throughout the years and events of the Spanish Civil War.

The Spanish Civil War of mid-July 1936 to 1 April 1939 has engendered immense debate and a plethora of publications, many of them focused upon the International Brigade and communism in the fight against Franco's fascist insurrection against the communist-dominated Spanish Republican government. From the ILP's point of view attention has focused upon the involvement of George Orwell (Eric Blair), who later joined the ILP, and his book, *Homage to Catalonia* (1937). Orwell's book, the manuscript of which was rejected by Victor Gollancz and the communist-minded Left Book Club, dealt with Orwell's experiences

whilst fighting with POUM alongside ILP contingent and highlighted the way in which the Spanish Republican government demonised them as 'Fifth Columnists' and fascists, before imprisoning, and in some cases executing, their leaders. The picture that Orwell presented resonated within the ILP as a true reflection of events and the experiences of their volunteers in Spain.

The seeds of conflict and tensions between the ILP and the Soviet-supported communist-dominated Spanish Republican government were evident, although the ILP was defensive of it at first. In the autumn of 1936 one of the big issues was the reports of Catholic priests being murdered by the communists and socialists in Spain, the cause of much concern in the Catholic press. John McGovern, MP, raised as a Catholic in Glasgow, offered a 'Reply to the Roman Catholic Press', and pulled no punches in attacking the 'Politics of the Pulpit' by suggesting that 'I have never known such Fascist and lying propaganda as has been indulged in by the Catholic Press and by the circulation of leaflets throughout the country'.⁶⁵ He later went to Spain and joined with John McNair in November 1936 to gather information on the attitude of the Catholic Church in Spain, helping to produce the pamphlet, *Why Bishops back Franco: Report of a visit of investigation to Spain* in 1937.⁶⁶ This suggested that reports of Republicans murdering Catholic priests were greatly exaggerated even though those priests were generally supportive of fascism, that the churches were not mistreated, and that the Republican government treated Catholics well. This did not sit easily with the reports published by the Catholic press in the ILP's Glasgow redoubt, which in the November municipal elections was the only area where the ILP lost seats.⁶⁷ The McGovern/McNair investigation was widely accepted by the ILP, for it simply endorsed the official ILP line of the ILP of supporting the Republican Government of Spain, despite its previous concerns for neutrality in the Abyssinian crisis.

ILP branches throughout the country demonstrated in favour of the Spanish Republican government and began moves to support the Spanish workers. On 6 August 1936 the Shettleston branch of the ILP sent deputations to other socialist groups to organise a 'united front on behalf of the Spanish Workers', and on 13 August the local branch sent a letter to the Shettleston Co-operative 'asking them to send foodstuffs to the Spanish workers'.⁶⁸ Shortly afterwards it was to organise a Flag Day for the Spanish workers.⁶⁹ In fact, nationally the ILP raised more than £2,000 to support the struggle in Spain, and the London division published Jack Huntz's *Spotlight on Spain* and organised exhibitions to raise more money.⁷⁰ As a result of these efforts, the ILP was able to buy and equip the Joaquín Maurín Ambulance, named after the POUM leader.⁷¹ The ILP raised clothing, food, and medical supplies and, famously, £144 through a socialist-denial week in which ILP members were encouraged to give up luxuries for a week.⁷² The ILP was later to be involved from 7 June 1937 in providing, through the Basque Children's Fund, assistance for 41 Basque children who were housed at the old country house of Grange Street, Somerset, for exactly two years, until 26 of the children were returned to Spain and 15 found accommodations throughout Britain.⁷³ The remaining £50 7s 4d of the Fund was then transferred to the Spanish Relief Fund.⁷⁴

In the wake of the McGovern investigations and the ILP's rising financial commitments to Spain, which included providing foodstuffs for Spain,⁷⁵ the ILP enlisted volunteers to fight in Spain, and on 1 January 1937 about 25 members of the ILP left to fight in Spain, marching off to Victoria Station, under the leadership of Bob Edwards and singing the Internationale. They had thwarted an attempt by the Special Branch to prevent their departure, two hours ahead of the resurrection of the Foreign Enlistment Act which was to prevent any further such open enlistment.⁷⁶ By mid-1937 there were at least 35 British and Irish ILPers and seven foreign ILP volunteers in Spain.⁷⁷ The first contingent arrived on 10 January 1937 and were briefly trained at the Lenin Barracks in Barcelona, and then fought with the POUM militia on the Huesca Front in Catalonia, where Orwell was present to record their action as limited and their duties as the mundane business of building roads and dugouts and, occasionally, firing at the enemy across 200 yards of no-man's land alongside the occasional foray.

The branches closely associated themselves with POUM and the need for the unity of the socialist and Republican forces in Spain, Shettleston being at the fore in this.⁷⁸ However, the ILP, which was like POUM affiliated to the IRBSU, became quickly alarmed that the Spanish Communist Party had not signed with POUM an 'Agreement Against Calumny', put forward by POUM and the anarchist federation [FAI] to avoid actions 'which may ferment discord in the anti-Fascist front'.⁷⁹ Often represented as a Trotskyist organisation, Brockway was clear that 'The POUM is not a Trotskyist party', finding it, instead, to be a Leninist Communist Party.⁸⁰ He added that its leaders had disagreed from Trotsky over political actions and broken away from him, adding that it was customary for the communist party to denounce 'any Socialists who maintain a revolutionary attitude as Trotskyists', perhaps to hide the fact that the communist party had effectively disowned revolutionary activity at the 7th World Congress of the Third International in 1935.⁸¹ One might add that there were some Trotskyists in ILP but that most of them who had joined with the Marxist Group in February 1934 had left the ILP by October 1934.⁸² The relationship between the ILP Contingent and POUM was emphasised in *New Leader* throughout the Spanish Civil War. McNair visited Edwards and the ILP Contingent in Madrid in February 1937, emphasising its connections with POUM. In March 1937 McNair declared that 'We Are Proud of POUM', and in April 1937 it was suggested that it was untrue to suggest that POUM was not involved in the Defence of Madrid.⁸³ This latter assertion flew in the face of communist criticism that POUM was trying to bring about a social and political revolution in Spain when the immediate need was to win the war.

In order to tackle the rising tensions between socialist groups, and to encourage the formation of a United Front on Spain, a Unity Manifesto was agreed by the ILP, the CPGB and the Socialist League in January 1937, promulgated by Sir Stafford Cripps, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and the main figure in the Socialist League (SL).⁸⁴ Other meetings were organised, but this arrangement eventually collapsed in the summer and autumn of 1937 when the Labour Party forced the Socialist League to disband.⁸⁵ Even without Labour Party opposition

it would have undoubtedly failed because of the tensions and concerns that were developing in Spain. Indeed, the conflict between POUM and the Spanish communist party dominated Republican Government forces in Barcelona between 3 and 8 May 1937, effectively ending the Unity Manifesto. The ILP contingent was in Barcelona at that time, separated into four groups with one, of eight members, in the Hotel Falcon, a residency of the POUM militia. They were not drawn into any fighting, but their situation and the actions of a vengeful Republican government produced an immense reaction and a change of attitude towards communists, later recorded Orwell in *Homage to Catalonia*. The CPGB reported, through the *Daily Worker* of 11 May 1937, that POUM was in league with the fascists, a view fostered by the Third International. The ILP suspended judgement at first, whilst supporting the work of POUM in its stand for the Workers' Revolution, maintaining that 'we have also used our influence to maintain Workers' unity in the anti-Fascist struggle'.⁸⁶ That soon changed when Brockway wrote in the *New Leader* of 21 May 1937 about the 'Counter-Revolution in Spain', accusing the communists of being on the wrong side of the barricades and 'committed to the defence of property'. The NAC, supporting Brockway, boldly stated that 'The Party had identified itself with the political line of the POUM and has energetically repudiated the attacks which have been made upon the POUM by the Communist International'.⁸⁷ Brockway felt that the Soviet foreign policy, through the Seventh Congress, had suppressed revolutionary policy in favour of an alliance with democratic countries to help protect Russia from German aggression,⁸⁸ and absolved POUM from any blame for the Barcelona insurrection.⁸⁹ David Murray, of the Scottish ILP, also communicated with leading POUM and socialist figures in Spain, endorsing the critical view of the Spanish Communist Party controlled Republican Government and, with John McNair and John McGovern, urged 'the need of the ILP in Barcelona'.⁹⁰ Maxton's visit to Spain in August endorsed such views, and he later reflected 'That every day I was in Valencia the Communist Press denounced me as a Trotskyist and a Fascist'.⁹¹

Such comments provoked a bitter response from Rajani Palme Dutt, of the CPGB and the Third International, who particularly condemned Brockway and McNair and stated that the ILP volunteers had served under POUM and that their actions in supporting POUM were 'an act of treason which in any war would be punishable by death'; they were effectively 'fifth columnists' fighting for Franco.⁹² The *New Leader* response to such charges was that the ILP's purpose was not to unify the ILP and the CPGB but to find a common agreement, and it noted that the *Daily Worker* had refused to take an advertisement for Brockway's *The Truth About Barcelona*.⁹³

Amongst those enlisted in the ILP contingent was Bob [Robert Ramsay] Smillie, a 21-year-old Scot from Larkhall in Lanarkshire, a prominent member of the Guild of Youth and the grandson of the Scottish miners' leader Robert Smillie. Tensions between the ILP and the communists deepened when, in June 1937, the news of Bob Smillie's death emerged.⁹⁴ He had been arrested and imprisoned on 10 May 1937 by the communists when he was just about to return to Britain to lead a Youth Campaign. He was imprisoned in Valencia and is assumed to have

died of appendicitis. At that moment, and ever since, there has been suspicion that he died of neglect by his Spanish Republican communist captors, and even that he was executed. The *New Leader* published an appreciation of him, by McNair, and a booklet which remained neutral on the cause of his death based upon an investigation by Brockway, John Murray and Julian Gorkin.⁹⁵ In other words, there was some restraint being exercised on Smillie's death, a control which extended to attempts to prevent the Yorkshire, Lancashire and North-East divisions from exacerbating the situation by arranging for Trotskyist speakers to address ILP branches for fear of them heightening tensions.⁹⁶ In the end, the ILP merely reported that Smillie's death was great carelessness amounting to 'criminal negligence', rather than murder, and Brockway later declared that a strong boy should not have died of appendicitis, a report which was circulated to ILP branches and received with cautious scepticism by branches such as Shettleston.⁹⁷ However, the *New Leader* of 13 August 1937 reported the murder of Andres Nin, the POUM leader, again with suspicion falling upon the Spanish Communist Party and its ally, the Soviet Union.

The Spanish Civil War also occurred at the same time of the first Moscow Show Trials and, in January 1937, the *New Leader* reported the execution of 16 defendants, including the prominent Bolshevik leaders Zinoviev and Kamenev.⁹⁸ The NAC urged caution in jumping to conclusions and reflected that the *New Leader* was being assailed from both sides – the CPGB and the Third International, stressing that POUM was a Trotskyist organisation and by Patterson, of Clapham ILP and by Cund of Liverpool ILP, who wanted severe criticism of the Show Trials, largely because they were supporters of Leon Trotsky. Jack Huntz and Bill Jones also attacked the 'frame-up' of the defendants by the Soviet Union.⁹⁹

In this climate of fear and suspicion it is clear that the ILP and the *New Leader* were becoming increasingly critical of the Soviet Union in what emerged almost as a blizzard of searching articles. Maxton reviewed Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed* favourably although he did not feel that the title was justified.¹⁰⁰ In July 1937 Brockway condemned the 'Communist Conspiracy Against POUM' and the shooting of Russian generals arising from the Moscow Show Trials'.¹⁰¹ This, and much direct and implied criticism, eventually culminated in a letter sent to Stalin on 11 March 1938 by the ILP's four MPs and Brockway, which was then published as an open letter in the *New Leader* of the same day. It expressed the shock of the signatories, who had hailed the revolution of the Russian workers in 1917, and at the inhumane trials, which were not a good example of working-class justice. It also questioned why those being executed, degenerates as they were being described, had been allowed to rise to the top of the leadership ranks in the Soviet Union. Subsequently, at the ILP's Annual Conference of 1938, only one voice was raised in defence of the Moscow Trials, which were condemned by an overwhelming vote of 111 votes to 2.¹⁰²

In the end, the activities in Spain and the Moscow Trials had put paid to any close association with the Third International, never mind the CPGB. The statements of McGovern and Brockway acted as the final word. McGovern published a pamphlet entitled *Terror in Spain*, subtitled *How the COMMUNIST*

INTERNATIONAL destroyed Working-class Unity, undermined the fight against Franco, and suppressed the Social Revolution, condemning the 'vicious machine of the Comintern, Cheka Limited', in a reference to the name, for many years, of the Russian police. To McGovern the workers must be given freedom, not tyranny.¹⁰³ Relations between the ILP and communism had fully broken down by 1937, but Brockway drove the final nail in the coffin of ILP and communist relationships when he spoke to the Holborn and St. Pancras Group of the Peace Pledge Union in late September 1938 and suggested that every allegation made in the Moscow Trials that had been made and tested had proved false. He argued that, in Spain, the communists had been engaged in 'lying, forgery and assassination against another working-class party, the POUM, because of a disagreement in policy'.¹⁰⁴

These views were endorsed in George Orwell's book, *Homage to Catalonia*. Here, Orwell observed the way in which the communists vilified and imprisoned POUM figures, including its ILP volunteers, much in the way that the ILP had claimed. On his return to Britain and with the publication of his book, Orwell attended the ILP Summer School of 1937, held at Letchworth on 5 August 1937, and spoke with others in honour of Bob Smillie.¹⁰⁵ On 13 June 1938, he joined the ILP, though his membership only lasted to the Second World War when he left the ILP over its declared opposition to the war. His criticism of the Soviet Union was endorsed further by the NAC Report to the Scarborough Conference in 1939 and even by the 1940 ILP Conference which, in the context of the Soviet invasion of Finland, viewed that the workers state of 1936 had become a 'Stalinist regime'.¹⁰⁶

The debate over the Spanish Civil War and Moscow Show Trials clearly ended any prospect of the ILP affiliating to the Third International, though such an association was always unlikely, as it joined the widespread criticism of the Soviet Union. Yet it had other effects as well, most obviously upon the regional support of the ILP. It has been argued by Tom Buchanan that Catholic communities in Britain were overwhelmingly pro-Franco in the Spanish Civil War, although this has been challenged by Michael Schumacher, who feels that it was the Catholic press rather than the Catholic working class who were so inclined.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, it clearly raised electoral concerns in areas of significant Catholic presence, such as Liverpool and Glasgow. The Labour Party and the ILP carried limited influence in the former during the inter-war years, but the latter presented a problem. John Heenan, a Catholic Glasgow ILP councillor, lost his seat in the 1936 local elections, joined the Labour Party, and emphasised how the ILP did not appreciate the need to attend Mass for Catholics fighting for Franco. George Buchanan, ILP MP for Glasgow Gorbals, remained silent in his approval of the support for the official ILP line of supporting the Spanish Republican government. John McGovern, who had reported on events in Spain in 1936, was less reticent and debated with Douglas Jerrold, the Glasgow Catholic journalist in June 1937.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, as a result of the Spanish Civil War, the ILP lost significant support in one of its, by now, two remaining strongholds. The Spanish Civil War was, of course, less significant in Norwich and East Anglia, the other major stronghold of the ILP at the time, and had no marked impression on membership there.

The ILP drift to the Labour Party and the issue of the Popular Front and unity, and divisions over Munich

Whilst the ILP was in conflict with the CPGB and the Third International in the late 1930s, it began to drift towards the Labour Party. After disaffiliation in 1932 there had been intense hostility towards the Labour Party and parliamentary system, which was considered as part of the capitalist system, despite the opposition to some to the new revolutionary policy. Dr. C. A. Smith, who became chairman of the ILP on the eve of the Second World War, produced a short pamphlet entitled *Can Socialists Stay in the Labour Party*, asking Labour Party members to join the ILP to fight against fascism and the 'capitalist Tiger'.¹⁰⁹ This hostility towards the Labour Party built up from the conflict in parliamentary contents after 1932. Between 1932 and 1935 the ILP lost in three parliamentary by-elections with the Kilmarnock by-election seeing the progressive voter divided between the ILP and Labour candidate, thus allowing in each case a supporter of the National Government to be returned. In the 1935 general election the ILP stood 17 candidates of whom only four – Maxton, Buchanan, McGovern and Campbell Stephen – were returned, and all for Glasgow seats. In East Bradford, Fred Jowett's presence denied the Labour Party victory, and a similar situation prevailed at North Lanark where Jennie Lee was the candidate. This was not a distinguished performance, and the ILP had advised that where there were Labour candidates prepared to follow their line on Abyssinia, at that time it meant opposing the League of Nations over sanctions against Italy.¹¹⁰ There were no signs at this time that the ILP was particularly interested in working with the Labour Party, definite signs that there were difficulties in trying to work with the communists over the United Front and Popular Front, but a feeling that the United Front initiative, at least, had not been exhausted. That view was soon ended by the Spanish Civil War. In the meantime, there was continued efforts to bring the Labour Party into the United Front against Fascism, though there was little prospect that they would bear fruit because of the refusal of the Labour Party to work with communists. James Jupp has stressed that the National Joint Council of Labour, representing the Labour Party, the PLP and the TUC, made it clear that its statement, *Democracy versus Dictatorship*, 'stated the case against Communism and Fascism, with equal vigour'.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, the ILP continued in its efforts at creating a United Front and in August 1936 wrote to the Labour Party, the CPGB and Co-operative parties in a letter that was published as *Get Round the Table*.¹¹² This urged that all four parties should get together to form a joint committee, although the ILP showed little support for the Popular Front that had been announced by the Seventh World Congress of the Third International. However, the United Front proposal was never realistic, not least because in the mid-1930s the Labour Party was fighting off CPGB attempts to affiliate with the Labour Party in the mid-1930s.¹¹³

All that was really achieved was that the ILP and the CPGB, co-operated in their counter-demonstrations against the British Union of Fascists (BUF and later BU), and at the Battle of Cable Street on 4 October 1936, when they joined with the Jewish population to barricade the streets and prevent the march. Both the ILP

and the CPGB gloried in these events, the *New Leader* reporting that 'Mosley Did Not Pass! What happened in East London and Why'.¹¹⁴ The ILP published, 'A Souvenir of the East London Workers' Victory over Fascism' under the title, *THEY DID NOT PASS, 300,000 WORKERS SAY NO TO MOSLEY*, taking much of the credit for the organisation of the demonstration and playing down the communist role. This was considerably more acknowledgement than the communists gave to the role of the ILP, for they simply noted that the CPGB had appealed to the workers to gather at Aldgate and Cable Street.¹¹⁵ Both the ILP and the CPGB were clearly attempting to present themselves in the best light as the organisers of the dispute, a stance which clearly ignored the role of many others, including the Jewish People's Council, which had collected 100,000 signatures against the march, and the roles of J. H. Hall, the MP for Whitechapel, and George Lansbury, then Mayor of Poplar and previously Leader of the Labour Party.¹¹⁶

The United Front against Fascism created little socialist unity, and the initiative of the Socialist League, as already indicated, was no more successful. It met with the ILP and the CPGB, then organised joint negotiations in November 1936 and endorsed a Unity Campaign. Together ILP, CPGB and the SL called for the Spanish Republic to make 'facilities for the provision of arms'.¹¹⁷ Such accord was not to last. The CPGB now wished to affiliate to the Labour Party and press forward with the Popular Front, neither proposal of which the ILP could accept at this time.¹¹⁸ The SL and Cripps, on the other hand, formed *Tribune* to support the Unity campaign, but its first issue reported that a large number of its members voted against it at a special SL conference in mid-January, and with abstentions slightly outnumbering those approving the Unity Manifesto.¹¹⁹ Within a few months, the Labour Party suggested that it would disaffiliate the SL from its ranks on 1 June 1937, and following that announcement the SL decided to dissolve.¹²⁰

By the end of 1937 and the beginning of 1938, it was becoming crystal clear that the ILP and the Third International would not be uniting, that the Unity campaign was not going to succeed and that the ILP had to re-assess its position. Brockway, whilst justifying the ILP's disaffiliation in 1932 and arguing that the Party was now more focused in its policy, revived the possibility of re-affiliating to the Labour Party in his, 'A Survey of the Party Position', presented to the NAC in November 1937. His report suggested that affiliation would allow it to influence the Labour Party, increase its membership, and increase the circulation of the *New Leader* and ILP sales of literature. Whilst acknowledging that the ILP would not be able to vote independently in Parliament, Brockway felt that it could insist that the Party would be able to continue as an organised united party with its own paper and literature, and the minimum conditions of ILP affiliation. Brockway felt that such a situation seemed to favour the *Workers' Front* rather than the Popular Front of the CPGB.¹²¹ He hoped Labour would not contest the four Glasgow seats, and North Lanark, East Bradford and one of the Norwich seats to allow the ILP to make an arrangement with the Labour Party at the next election on the basis that the ILP would not contest other seats against Labour candidates. At the ILP's Annual Easter Conference in 1938, there had been support for closer relations with the Labour Party, short of affiliation.¹²² Maxton had also come to the

conclusion that a closer relationship with the Labour Party was necessary, and in June 1938 was paraphrased as saying to J. S. Middleton, Assistant Secretary of the Labour Party, that 'The isolation of the ILP is no longer defensible. They [the ILP] were ready for co-operation and indicated that there had been no great clashes in Parliament since 1935'.¹²³

This ILP approach to Labour was fuelled by need but faced serious obstacles. It opposed the Labour Party's support for non-intervention in Spain but, ironically, was also opposed to Labour's failure to oppose the fight against rearmament that had gone on in Britain since 1936. Nevertheless, there were glimmers of hope emerging for a rapprochement. Indeed, Brockway approached J. S. Middleton, the Assistant General Secretary of the Labour Party, on 4 February 1935, suggesting that 'we have to put aside the fratricide warfare and found a union for action' to fight fascism.¹²⁴ However, there was considerable opposition on the Labour side to such action and the moves lapsed.¹²⁵ However, by the time of the Munich agreement following Hitler's demands and threats to Czechoslovakia, the *New Leader* was demanding 'STOP WAR' and was later urging its readers to 'Resist War'.¹²⁶ However, the Munich crisis of September 1938 created deep divisions within ILP ranks and delayed its drift to re-affiliation with Labour.

Neville Chamberlain's agreement to accept German control of Sudetenland, in Czechoslovakia, and the peaceful resolution of international disputes at the end of September 1938 was problematic, pushing the NAC again into conflict with the Parliamentary Group and the IE. On 25 September 1938, shortly before the Munich agreement, the ILP had unanimously condemned the possibility of a war, publishing a leaflet entitled *RESIST WAR*. However, as Chamberlain departed for Munich, Maxton had spoken in the House of Commons to wish him well. On 4 October, after Chamberlain returned with the Munich agreement, Maxton, in the House of Commons, condemned war but distanced himself from Chamberlain and the Munich agreement and called for a socialist revolution to end imperialism and capitalism, but, nonetheless, congratulated the Prime Minister on his work.¹²⁷ This was highlighted by McNair in the article, 'Maxton's Great Speech in Parliament'.¹²⁸ However, Brockway and Aplin objected and, though outvoted by the Executive Committee, were allowed to express their criticism of Maxton's actions.¹²⁹ What seemed like a splitting of hairs became more controversial when McGovern, without any reference to the ILP's opposition to imperialism and war, honoured Chamberlain with the time-honoured encomium, 'Well done, though good and faithful servant'.¹³⁰

The issue did not go away, as there was brooding within the Party and the socialist press for the next few months. Then, at the ILP Conference in April 1939, the Croydon and Southend branches called for expulsion of the ILP's Parliamentary Group, which, of course, included Maxton. The Greenwich branch introduced a motion repudiating the congratulations offered to Mr. Chamberlain by Maxton and McGovern at the time of Munich, published in the Parliamentary Group report, and further repudiated McGovern's 'Imperialist speech' on Palestine.¹³¹ It was supported by the Clapham and Birmingham City branches. At the other extreme, the Bradford ILP branch tried to reverse the motion, congratulating

Maxton and McGovern on their actions. There was much soul-searching by Maxton, C. A. Smith, Brockway and Aplin at the Conference in an attempt to resolve the situation. Brockway, in particular, argued that there were three ways of dealing with the impending war – appeasement, opposition to Germany by the democratic powers, and the opposition of workers to a bad war and a bad peace, the last of which he supported. In the end, all of the resolutions to expel the Parliamentary Group, to support the Group, and other variants were defeated and it was decided, by 65 votes to 43, simply not to reference back the Parliamentary Group. In the end, as Cohen suggests, this was ‘a very uneasy vote of confidence after a very public spat’.¹³²

The problem for the ILP was how was it to reconcile its hatred of war and the pacifism of some of its members with an underlying opposition to fascism. It had been so divided over the Abyssinian crisis but was prepared to fight against fascism in Spain and was now faced with a quandary of supporting action against war in a potential wider conflagration. Brockway tried to square the circle in speaking to the Peace Pledge Union. Here he suggested that the ILP would oppose a war between the democratic states and the fascist states, and any action by the League of Nations, but argued that ‘the ILP is not pacifist’ for the transition from capitalism to socialism could not be made by the pacifist method. In other words, the ILP would resist war passively but also ‘prepare for the moment when the war could be ended by the overthrow of the capitalist and war-making governments across the frontiers’, something which suggested the need for a workers and socialist revolution against the capitalist system in general.¹³³ Brockway’s speech was something of a compromise, reflecting the tensions between a pacifist Parliamentary Group and the wide support within the ILP to fight fascism, to defend Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia and other oppressed countries. According to Brockway, it was clear that the ILP was not a pacifist party but that it was committed to workers’ revolution rather than to an anti-fascist war. This was an opaque statement, especially when the ILP was seeking to re-affiliate to the Labour Party at a time when it is clear that the Labour Party was preparing for the possibility of fighting a war against Nazi Germany.

The Labour Party and ‘the ILP flea’

The ILP’s membership had declined rapidly in the 1930s.¹³⁴ Not surprisingly, the finances of the Party had fallen equally dramatically from, for instance, £2,100 in 1934/1935 to £319 in 1937/1938.¹³⁵ This enormous decline was also evident in the loss of branches, the fragmenting of the ILP, the financial struggles of the party and the financial struggles of the *New Leader* and other ILP publications. Every one of the nine ILP Divisions had declined dramatically, despite the expansion of the Norwich branch in East Anglia as the 1930s progressed. It had also become obvious that the hostility of the Labour Party and the CPGB was likely to thwart any prospect of a ‘United Front’ and a ‘Workers’ Front, which the ILP favoured just as much as the Popular Front, which it opposed. It was clear that the occasional contacts with the Labour Party in the 1930s, previously referred

to, had led nowhere, except for the occasional local arrangement. Nevertheless, from 1936 the *New Leader* was reporting on the possibility of re-affiliating to the Labour Party if organisational restrictions on the ILP's revolutionary policy were removed.¹³⁶ Brockway conducted a survey of the ILP's position on re-affiliation in 1937 and concluded that re-affiliation was necessary in order for the ILP to build links with the network of left-wingers in the Labour Party but emphasised that this must be done on the basis of favourable electoral arrangements in its own strongholds, such as Norwich and North Lanark.¹³⁷ The possibility of re-affiliation was discussed at a special conference held one weekend in February 1938 where about two-thirds of those present voted against the resolution of Birkenhead, Todmorden and Gorton for an immediate application to the Labour Party for conditional affiliation.¹³⁸ However, when the Annual ILP Easter Conference was held at Manchester in 1938, re-affiliation was not on the table, except in the more general and wide-ranging form:

an essential step towards securing the unity of the working class on a federal basis, either within the Labour Party or by a Workers' Front including the Labour Party, is for Revolutionary Socialism to unite in one Revolutionary Socialist Party.

The resolution was won by a narrow vote of 55 votes to 49, revealing how divided the Labour Party remained on the issue of re-affiliation.¹³⁹

There were clear tensions within the ILP between those who felt that fascism had changed the circumstances which required the workers' movement to move within the Labour Party and those who felt that the ILP would be submerged in the Labour Party, the latter group including many Glasgow ILPers and Fred Jowett.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, following on from Brockway's lead, the ILP began serious discussions with the Labour Party in the summer of 1938 in the hope of reversing its fortunes.

The possibility of talks was announced in May 1938 and, after a few weeks of exploratory discussion, talks began on 14 June 1938.¹⁴¹ The ILP delegation of James Maxton, John Aplin, Campbell Stephen, John McGovern and Fenner Brockway met James Middleton and the Labour Party representatives.¹⁴² All except Maxton, whose position has been the subject of intense debate given his perceived attitude to re-affiliation and his vote against such an action in the 1938 Scottish Divisional Conference, were clearly in favour of re-affiliation even if their reasons for this may have varied.¹⁴³ Brockway revealed that relations between the ILP and the CPGB 'were now extremely bitter', and Maxton declared that the Standing Orders that had led to disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1932 were 'of quite small importance to-day', although he admitted that the ILP was divided on affiliation.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the Labour Party expressed concerns about the organisational impact of the ILP re-affiliating and that the ILP delegation had no mandate to agree to affiliation.

Ten days later the Labour Party, despite some misgivings, made it clear that it was looking for the ILP to re-affiliate. The NAC of the ILP then decided on

having some type of 'united action and an electoral agreement' and, with only Aplin dissenting, agreed to continue the dialogue with Labour.¹⁴⁵ The issue was a contentious one, with the Birmingham Quaker Joseph Southall opposing re-affiliation through *New Leader* whilst Brockway and the NAC supported it.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the dialogue between Brockway and James Middleton, General Secretary of the Labour Party, continued, and the NAC asked the Labour Party what conditions would be imposed if the ILP were to affiliate. The Labour Party did not reply to this request until February 1939, suggesting that there was no need to discuss conditions since they were laid out in the Labour Party's constitution.¹⁴⁷ The answer was hardly likely to be welcomed by a deeply divided ILP which had still to give its formal approval for affiliation through its Annual Conference. Indeed, in order to clarify the position for the Annual Conference, the NAC had set up a sub-committee composed of John Carmichael, Percy Williams, John Aplin, Emrys Thomas, Bob Edwards and John McNair (Secretary) which reported to the Annual Conference of 1939, suggesting that the ILP should remain independent but that individual members should join the Labour Party; the latter suggestion being a highly impractical scenario given that Morgan Phillips, the Propaganda Officer (and later General Secretary) of the Labour Party, was acting to proscribe dual membership of the Labour Party and gathering evidence of them in his 'Lost Sheep' files.¹⁴⁸

The Annual Easter ILP Conference held at the Roscoe Rooms in Scarborough on 8 April 1939 revealed that deep divisions still existed. The final agenda for the conference included motions from all sides. The Alexandria branch, the re-organised Guild of Youth, the Scottish Divisional Council, and its representatives Lachlan McQuarrie and David Gibson, opposed affiliation. They were supported by Fred Jowett, Jennie Lee and many others, largely because they felt that the Labour Party was failing and that the impending war was a bigger concern. The Nottingham branch advocated conditional affiliation, and this was supported by the Welsh Divisional Council, which welcomed the negotiations. The Norwich branch, through Reg Spraggins and Arthur South, strongly supported unconditional affiliation, as did the Clapham branch and Tom Taylor and James Carmichael, both of whom were Glasgow councillors.¹⁴⁹ However, the resolution in favour of unconditional affiliation was defeated by 63 votes to 45, and one in favour of members of the ILP joining the Labour Party as individuals was also defeated by 68 votes to 43. The special committee recommendations were also rejected by 68 votes to 42. The resolution in favour of conditional affiliation was then passed by 69 votes to 40.¹⁵⁰ It fell to C. A. Smith, who was opposed to re-affiliation, but then elected as chairman of the Party to implement the policy.¹⁵¹ Frustrated by such equivocation and inconsistency, George Buchanan, one of the ILP's four MPs, re-joined the Labour Party.¹⁵²

The Executive Committee of the ILP now appointed a negotiating committee of Brockway, Maxton, Smith and McNair to implement the conditional affiliation decision of the Conference.¹⁵³ However, from the start it was clear that the Labour Party would not alter its existing position.¹⁵⁴ As a result, the situation for the ILP looked abject – seeing no hope for its position within the Labour Party and

little prospect for it outside. Some members of the NAC, such as Tom Stephenson, were resigned to accepting whatever was decided, whilst Jowett remained firmly opposed to affiliation because any attempt by the ILP to change the PLP's standing orders would be smothered by the block vote. In the end, the NAC met on 5 August 1939, with the representatives from Scotland and London favouring continued independence and those from Lancashire, South Wales, and the Midlands, despite the opposition of one of its representatives to it (Tom Reed), and East Anglia strongly in favour of re-affiliation. In the case of East Anglia, there was general support for affiliation despite the opposition of the Norwich and Great Yarmouth branches. The resolution to seek re-affiliation was carried by eight votes to six, with Smith and Jowett amongst the minority and Maxton and Brockway with the majority. It was then agreed that there would be a final decision to be made at a special conference on 17 September 1939, somewhere in or near Leeds, with the affiliation question being the only item on the agenda.¹⁵⁵ However, when the Second World War began on 3 September 1939, the NAC immediately suspended its application for affiliation to the Labour Party.

Soon afterwards, the ILP declared its opposition to the Second World War.¹⁵⁶ However, as was crystal clear, the ILP was not a pacifist party as such, for whilst it contained pacifists within it, the official policy was that whilst it was not acceptable to fight for capitalism it might be necessary to fight for socialism. There remained a plurality of views within the ILP. This saw the revival of the No-Conscription Fellowship in January 1939, and with William Ballantyne of the ILP acting as Chairman and Brockway on the Provisional Committee, it gained pacifist support within the Party. Nevertheless, at the same time there were those who felt impelled to fight against injustice. In particular, C. A. Smith, Chairman, was unable to accept that Stalin's invasion of Finland had anything to do with British Imperialism and in the end, he eventually left the ILP. Divisions between the pacifists, opposed to capitalist and imperialistic wars and those who demanded workers' revolutionary action, or indeed simply wished to fight injustice whatever the situation, persisted.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

There is no escaping the fact that, on both national and international issues, the ILP was a badly divided party in the 1930s when three major features came to define its position. First, it is clear that it was a declining force within British left-wing politics, barely clinging on to any influence at all and merely becoming Hugh Dalton's irritating 'ILP flea'. Secondly, and despite its rapid decline, it was evident that the ILP was never going to find a way to affiliate with either the Third International or the Labour Party after 1932, clinging on to its belief that it needed to preserve its right to criticise either of these potentially parent organisations if it so wished. Neither organisation was willing to allow it to act in that manner, effectively as a party within a party, and the ILP was not willing to be controlled by democratic centralism of communism nor be swamped and submerged by the trade union block vote, or any other vote, within the Labour Party. Thirdly, the

ILP was clearly deeply divided on the issues of pacifism and war, and on how to achieve a workers' revolutionary policy. These divisions and tensions were amplified by the varying circumstances of the various geographical regions of the ILP and by tensions between, on the one hand, the Parliamentary Group, which tended to dominate the Inner Executive and the Executive Committee, and the NAC and Conference. These divisions were exposed by the Abyssinian crisis, where it was only a willingness to compromise by Brockway, the NAC and the Party Conference that avoided a complete disintegration of the Party. By the end of 1935, the Unity Group and, on the other, the RPC, the cause of so much conflict in the early 1930s, had gone. Yet even a rump of an ILP could not sustain a unity of purpose over international issues or permanently define a clear commitment to peace. All that had occurred is that the internecine conflict over domestic policies in the 1920s and early 1930s had been replaced by an internecine conflict over its international policies in the mid and late 1930s, which blocked attempts to join the Third International/CPGB and to re-join the Labour Party.

Notes

- 1 Flewers, *The New Civilisation?*; Kevin Morgan, *The Webbs and Soviet Communism: Bolshevism and the British Left Part 2*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 2006; Bernard Crick, *George Orwell: A Life*, London, Penguin, 1982, p. 285.
- 2 Brockway, *Socialism at the Cross Roads*, pp. 8–9.
- 3 London Divisional Council of the ILP, London Statement, 23 March 1930, a 34-page document in the BPLES, ILP 9–60, particularly p. 18.
- 4 Fenner Brockway, *Socialism Over Sixty Years: The Life of Jowett of Bradford*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1944, p. 327.
- 5 *NAC Report* 1924, p. 33.
- 6 *Labour's Northern Voice*, 6 January 1928 saw the first article in this series by G. W. Dillon.
- 7 *Labour Leader*, 16 April 1920 and Keith Laybourn, *Philip Snowden: A Biography, 1864–1937*, Aldershot, Temple Smith, 1988, p. 86.
- 8 *New Leader*, 27 September 1929.
- 9 *Revolutionary Socialist Bureau*, 3, March 1936.
- 10 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 86–7.
- 11 *ILP Conference Report* 1933, pp. 6–13.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.
- 13 *New Leader*, 2 November 1934.
- 14 Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow*, p. 109.
- 15 *The ILP and the Communist International: Full text of the correspondence*, London, ILP, 1934, letter dated 18 May 1933, p. 3.
- 16 *The ILP and the Communist International*, pp. 2–3.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 18 *New Leader*, 30 June, 7, 14, 21 July 1933.
- 19 *Ibid.*, letter dated 17 September 1933, and 12 January 1934.
- 20 *The ILP and the Communist International*, pp. 15–19, letters dated 6 October 1933 and 8 January 1934, respectively.
- 21 *Ibid.*, letter dated 8 January 1934.
- 22 The ILP and Comintern with the 21 Points. Correspondence between the secretaries of the British ILP and the Executive Committee of the Communist International, ILP 1934, pp. 3–5, 11.

- 23 KV2/ 1919 file on A. F. Brockway, with special reports on his activities, mainly in the 1930s, by Special Branch and MI5. There are constant references to Brockway and the Comintern (Third International) and the CPGB not being able to work together.
- 24 Bob Edwards and Eric Whalley, *Revolutionary Unity, Answers by leading members of the Communist International to questions raised by the ILP*, London, Progressive Bookshop, 1934.
- 25 Ibid., p. 17.
- 26 Ibid., p. 18.
- 27 Ibid., p. 19. Jay Lovestone, whose real name was Jacob Liebshtein, was an American activist, at various times a member of the Socialist Party of America, and a leader of the Communist Party of the USA from 1919 to 1929. He fell out of favour when Stalin purged Bukharin in 1929 and formed the Communist Party (Majority Group later called Opposition) which operated throughout the 1930s and in the 1940s. He was later an activist as a trade unionist and also connected with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).
- 28 Minutes of the Inner Executive, 5 December 1934; Report of the Inner Executive to the NAC April 1935.
- 29 NAC Minutes, 24 April 1935, Report of a meeting between J. Maxton, A. F. Brockway, Harry Pollitt and Willie Gallacher in the House of Commons, 12 April 1935.
- 30 *New Leader*, 22 February 1934.
- 31 ILP Conference document 2, *A Socialist Policy for Britain*, London, ILP, 1935, p. 19.
- 32 *The London RPC Bulletin*, No. 13, June 1934.
- 33 *NAC Report 1936*, p. 6.
- 34 *London RPC Bulletin*, no. 21, 31 July 1935.
- 35 *New Leader*, 10 January 1936.
- 36 Ibid., 13 September 1935.
- 37 Ibid., 18 October 1935.
- 38 Ibid., 13 December 1935.
- 39 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 170–6.
- 40 *New Leader*, 27 September and 11 October 1935.
- 41 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 103–4.
- 42 Minutes of the Inner Executive, 24 October 1935; *New Leader*, 4 October 1935.
- 43 *New Leader*, 11 October 1935.
- 44 Executive Committee Minutes, 13 September 1935.
- 45 *New Leader*, 7 February and 6 March 1936; NAC minutes, 15–16 February 1936.
- 46 *Controversy*, October 1935, ‘Abyssinia – Where does the ILP Stand’, pp. 15–16.
- 47 *RPC Bulletin*, no. 22 October 1935.
- 48 *New Leader*, 1 November 1935; *RPC Bulletin*, November 1935.
- 49 *New Leader*, 10 April 1936.
- 50 Ibid., 17 April 1936.
- 51 *ILP Annual; Conference Report 1936*.
- 52 Ibid., p. 5.
- 53 *New Leader*, 17 April 1936.
- 54 Executive Committee minutes, 23 May 1936; Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 174.
- 55 Bullock, *Under Siege*, p. 298.
- 56 Report of the Scrutineers, 30 June 1936, signed by Francis Johnson and John Aplin.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 *NAC Annual Report, 1937*, p. 21.
- 59 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, p. 175.
- 60 ILP, *Through the Class Struggle to Socialism*, London, ILP, 1937.
- 61 Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, p. 176.
- 62 *New Leader*, 28 August 1936.
- 63 Ibid., 4 September 1936.

- 64 John McNair, *In Spain Now!* London, ILP, 1936; *New Leader*, 13 November 1936.
- 65 *New Leader*, 16 October 1936.
- 66 Ibid., 11 December 1936 offers a report, 'Why Spanish Workers Hate Churches', in which it was reported that McGovern had returned from Spain, had met the ILP Parliamentary Group, and told them that the reports of murder and the rape of nuns in Spain was not true, and further reported that McGovern would be opening his Spanish campaign in Glasgow on Sunday (13 December).
- 67 McNair also wrote *In Spain Now!*.
- 68 Shettleston ILP Minute Book 1935–1938, ILP 9–74.
- 69 Ibid., 21 August 1936.
- 70 *NAC Report 1937*, pp. 3–4.
- 71 *New Leader*, 25 September 1937.
- 72 Ibid., 7 May 1937; NAC Minutes 2 August 1937.
- 73 Ibid., 2 and 4 June 1937; NAC Minutes, 17 July 1937, 13 November 1937.
- 74 EC of the NAC, 23 April 1939.
- 75 Shettleston ILP Minutes, 6 and 13 August 1936.
- 76 *New Leader*, 15 January 1937, Frank Gant article on 'How the ILP Got Away'.
- 77 Christopher Hall, 'Not Just Orwell': *The Independent Labour Party Volunteers and the Spanish Civil War*, Pontypool, Warren & Pell, 2009, pp. 103–23. The total list of names appears on pages 116–17. *New Leader*, 30 April 1937 lists some of the London Contingent to Spain, and the issue for 23 April 1937 lists four ILPers wounded on the Aragon Advance.
- 78 Shettleston ILP Minutes, 15 August 1937.
- 79 *New Leader*, 19 February 1937.
- 80 Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge*, London, Harper, 2000 edition, p. 6; Ian Slater, *Orwell: The Road to Airstrip One*, Montreal and Kingston, McGill Queen's University Press, 2nd edition, 2003, 134; Brockway, *Workers' Front*, p. 74.
- 81 Fenner Brockway, *The Truth About Barcelona*, London, ILP, 1937, p. 13.
- 82 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 102–9.
- 83 *New Leader*, 12 February, 12 March, 2 April 1937.
- 84 Ibid., 15 January 1937 reported on the meeting that forged the Unity Manifesto. The SL was represented by William Mellor, Stafford Cripps and G. R. Aitchison. The ILP representatives were James Maxton, Fred Jowett and Fenner Brockway, whilst the CPGB was represented by Harry Pollitt, Willie Gallacher and Rajani Palme Dutt.
- 85 *New Leader*, 2, 9 April, 29 October 1937.
- 86 Ibid., 14 May 1937.
- 87 *NAC Report 1937*, p. 4.
- 88 *New Leader*, 21 May 1937; Brockway, *The Truth About Barcelona*, pp. 3–15.
- 89 *New Leader*, 18 June 1937; Dan McArthur, *We Carry On: Our Tribute to Bob Smillie*, London, ILP, 1937.
- 90 David Murray ACC 7914 (Box 2), correspondence relating to the Spanish Civil War 1936–1939, National Library of Scotland, particularly the correspondence between Guillerma Neuman and David Murray, and those on the International Brigade with John McNair and John McGovern.
- 91 *New Leader*, 3 September 1937.
- 92 *Daily Worker*, 23 May 1937, 'Spain Organises for Victory'.
- 93 *New Leader*, 18 June 1937; McArthur, *We Carry On*.
- 94 *New Leader*, 18 June 1937.
- 95 Ibid., 28 May, 4 June 1937; *Daily Worker*, 10 June 1937.
- 96 NAC minutes, 11–12 December 1937.
- 97 *NAC Report 1938*, p. 6; *New Leader*, 11 March 1938; Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow*, p. 125; Shettleston Minutes, 17 March 1938.

- 98 *New Leader*, 29 January 1937.
- 99 *Ibid.*, 2 April 1937.
- 100 *Ibid.*, 11 June 1937.
- 101 *Ibid.*, 26 July 1937.
- 102 *Ibid.*, 22 April 1938.
- 103 John McGovern, MP, *Terror in Spain*, London, ILP, 1938, p. 13.
- 104 A. Fenner Brockway, *Pacifism and the Left Wing: Address to 'After the Crisis' weekend conference of Holborn and St. Pancras Group of Peace Pledge Union*, London, Pacifist Publicity Union, 1938, p. 15.
- 105 Crick, *George Orwell*, p. 348.
- 106 NAC Report 1939, p. 3; *Final Agenda of Resolutions and Amendments to be presented before the 48th Annual Conference, 23–25 March 1940 at Nottingham*, p. 28.
- 107 Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 184; Michael Schumacher, 'British Catholic Perception of the Spanish Civil War', www.eiu.edu.historic.Historic.2008,Schumacher.
- 108 *New Leader*, 11 June 1937.
- 109 C. A. Smith, *Can Socialists Stay in the Labour Party*, London, ILP, 1934.
- 110 *Election Manifesto of the Independent Labour Party, 1935*.
- 111 James Jupp, *The Radical Left in Britain 1931–1941*, London, Frank Cass, 1982, p. 46.
- 112 *Get Round the Table!* letter of 4 August 1936 and later appeared as an appendix to the NAC report to the 1937 annual conference, pp. 23–4.
- 113 NAC minutes 4 and 5 July 1936, pp. 2, 6.
- 114 *New Leader*, 9 October 1936; *They Did Not Pass 300,000 Workers Say to Mosley*, London, ILP, 1936, pp. 3, 6 and 8.
- 115 *The Daily Worker*, 5 October 1936.
- 116 Robert Benewick, *The Fascist Movement in Britain*, London, Allen Lane/Penguin, 1972 edition, pp. 225–6.
- 117 *NAC Report 1937*, p. 6; NAC minutes 7–8 November 1936; Executive Committee Minutes, 24 November 1936.
- 118 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 134–5.
- 119 *Tribune*, 1 January 1937.
- 120 *New Leader*, 2 April 1937; *Tribune*, 14, 21 May 1937.
- 121 'A Survey of the Party Position', November 1937.
- 122 James Middleton Papers, JSM/ILP/37, 24 November 1938.
- 123 *Ibid.*, JSM/ILP/31, 14 June 1938.
- 124 *Ibid.*, JSM/ILP/4.
- 125 *Ibid.*, JSM/ILP/12. Is a letter from James Compton, of the National Union of Vehicular Builders, dated 8 July 1935, strongly opposing any dealings with the ILP, and there is Hugh Dalton's letter, JSM/ILP/15 dismissing the 'ILP flea'.
- 126 *New Leader*, 2, 9, 23, 30 September 1938.
- 127 McNair, *Maxton*, pp. 273–6.
- 128 *New Leader*, 7 October 1938; Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 194.
- 129 McNair, *Maxton*, p. 277; *New Leader*, 14 October 1938.
- 130 *New Leader*, 14 October 1938.
- 131 Final Agenda for ILP Conference 1939, pp. 48, 50.
- 132 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 195.
- 133 Brockway, *Pacifism and the Left Wing*, pp. 16–17.
- 134 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 31.
- 135 NAC letter sections, 28 February 1935 and 31 December 1937, and affiliation year and quota ending 29 February 1938. The £2,100 or 1934/19355 consisted of £550 affiliation fees, £168 branch quota, £800 Power Fund and £785 donations. Of the fees, £73 7s 6d was returned to the Divisions. In 1937/1938, the branch receipts were £98 1s 11d, the quota was £319 4s 4d, and the return to Divisions was £47 8s 3d.

- 136 *New Leader*, 5 June and 12 December 1936.
- 137 Brockway, 'A Survey of the Party Position', 13 November 1937.
- 138 *New Leader*, 18 February 1938.
- 139 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 153.
- 140 *New Leader*, 2 September 1938; *Controversy*, April 1938.
- 141 *New Leader*, 27 May 1938.
- 142 The Labour Party representatives were Mrs. Ayrton Gould, James Middleton, George Dallas, Hugh Dalton, James Walker, George Latham, Harold Laski, and George Shepherd.
- 143 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 155–6.
- 144 Notes in an interview between representatives of the Labour Party and Representatives of the ILP held on 14 June 1938, LHASC/JSM/ILP/31, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People's History Museum.
- 145 NAC minutes, 30, 31 July and 1 August 1938.
- 146 *New Leader*, 29 July, 5 August and 2 September 1938; Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 273.
- 147 *NAC Report to Conference*, 1939, Appendix 5.
- 148 Ibid.; Labour History Archives and Study Centre (People's History Museum), LP/GS/LS, 'Lost Sheep'. Morgan Phillips was a Propaganda Officer of the Labour Party from 1937 and soon rose to become secretary of the Labour Party in 1944, re-titled General Secretary from 1960.
- 149 *Final Agenda of ILP Conference 1939*, pp. 36–44.
- 150 Bullock, *Under Siege*, pp. 311–12.
- 151 *New Leader*, 7, 14 April 1939; Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, 158–60.
- 152 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 160; Bullock, *Under Siege*, pp. 313–14.
- 153 Executive Committee Minutes, 23 April 1939.
- 154 *New Leader*, 14 July 1939, the letter from J. S. Middleton.
- 155 NAC minutes, 5 August 1939.
- 156 *NAC Report 1940*; *New Leader*, 1, 8 September 1939.
- 157 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 195–7.

7 Voices from the ranks making the most of moment and form

**A distillation of the essence of the
cultural and political life of ILP
branches, federations, divisions
and their members, 1914–1939**

At the beginning of the 1980s, Stephen Yeo lectured in Bradford Central Library as part of a series of lectures on labour history, on ‘Making More of Moment than Form’. Here he offered a passionate defence of his article, ‘A New Life: The Religion of Socialism, 1883–1896’, in which he had argued that William Morris’s brand of ethical and religious socialism, which had so dominated the ILP and Clarion groups, had been about living the life of a socialist, but that with his death, in 1896, there was a dramatic move away from living that life to creating party organisation and winning elections.¹ Presented in an opaque manner, many of those present did not fully appreciate the context of the debate being paraded. Yet, at the end of the lecture, two elderly ex-ILP members of the audience stood up and roared their approval of the lecture, for Yeo had caught the spirit of the movement they had once known, for the moment for them had not stopped in 1896, or the 1930s, but continued at least until the Party faded into obscurity in the late 1930s, and possibly beyond. Indeed, apart from involving themselves in politics and the ideology of social democracy, many ILP branch members had developed a distinct cultural tone to their lives, derived and developed from the foundation years when the Party organised social activities, participated in Socialist Sunday Schools, sang, cycled, played a part in the Clarion Movement, with its motto ‘Fellowship is Life’, and staged their own plays, musicals and entertainment as an alternative to the conventional theatre and music of the day, in an attempt to live the life of a socialist.² It was a way of life – involving many members, networks and family groups which was assumed and rarely drawn attention to – that underpinned the national politics of the early ILP. It was a style of ethical socialism which combined social activities with politics and which declined as a whole, but in the late 1920s and 1930s, ironically, it became of rising importance within the ILP as it faced membership and electoral collapse towards the end of the inter-war years when those concerned mainly with political activity simply melted away. Nevertheless, throughout the Great War and the inter-war years, the grass roots of the ILP, in all its forms, developed through its branch life, which acted as a barometer of its health and wellbeing.

Yet surprisingly little historical attention has been drawn to the branch activity that shaped the ILP and was the fulcrum of a complex matrix of ideas, alliances, regional and local developments, cultural work and conditioned relations with

the local socialist and Labour organisations – the often unheard, unrecognised and unacknowledged voice of the ILP. Indeed, such neglect has been common for most grass roots branch activities of socialist organisations. Regional and local studies of the wider Labour movement barely existed in the late 1950s and the early 1960s before Asa Briggs, E. P. Thompson and other historians turned to examining history from below, rather than the London-based and national politics, and began to examine the activities of provincial labour movements.³ Later, many other writers, such as David Howell, Keith Laybourn, Jack Reynolds, and Mike Savage, emboldened this approach.⁴ However, even then, what emerged were largely local and regional histories of labour organisations which drew from branch records and local reports rather than examined the experience of those who were active branch members. More recently, Gidon Cohen partly addressed this lacuna.⁵ However, even his analysis of some of the Glasgow branches and the Norwich branch in the 1930s, important as it is, remains in the mould of a local history study, and the chapter in his book, *The Failure of a Dream*, though excellent for the 1930s, is focused more upon a national analysis of branch membership and ILP organisation than an analysis through a study of branches. The same is true of Richard's Stevens's study of the Derby ILP, the other rapidly growing branch of the ILP in the 1930s.⁶

Having examined the history of the ILP from 1914 to 1939, it is now apposite to reflect upon the work and commitment of the grass roots members of the ILP, the loyal volunteers who kept the Party going, by attempting a brief but broader examination of experiences. This includes the routine and mundane aspects of branch life, nominating people for affiliated bodies, filling and sealing envelopes and the like, even if the remaining branch records can never fully establish a 'typical' experience, for each branch was different and often operated in widely divergent economic, social and political circumstances.⁷

Matthew Worley touched upon this type of work in *Labour Inside the Gate*, his study of the Labour Party during the inter-war years.⁸ He drew from the records of more than 30 branches of the Labour Party to infuse his study with insight into the minds of Labour Party supporters of that period. This chapter draws from the records of around 60 ILP branches for much the same period as Worley's study, though many are little more than collections of financial statements and only a few of the minutes are for the very large and influential branches, and some divisions of the ILP have barely any surviving records, also, some of these, such as those for the Bargate ILP, for branches that ceased to operate within the national ILP after disaffiliation in 1932.⁹

One immediately realises from these skeletal remains of more than a 1,000 branches that once existed in the early 1920s paired down to just over 200 by the end of the 1930s, the precarious nature of the existence of many branches and the fact that size, and indeed ownership of property as will be seen later, greatly helped some branches to survive. Also, many of those branches that survived did so because they were often larger than the average-sized branch of about 35 fee-paying members in the early 1920s and the 15 or so of the 1930s.¹⁰ Yet, even the larger or medium-sized branches could struggle. Membership did not necessarily

translate into active participation and was often volatile. Indeed, in March 1924, the London-based Ilford ILP had 73 members on the books, although only 25 members were present at its monthly meeting, attendance rarely exceeding 18. This membership had fallen to 66 members, with 49 'good on the books' in the two months between the annual report given at the annual meeting in March and the May 1925 meeting.¹¹ The number of members was to rise to 75 by the end of the 1925, but the minutes stated that 'one regrets to say [that there was] a falling of interest' with only 37 'good on the books'.¹² The Ilford branch's poor situation continued, and by 1927 there were real concerns that the small number of members running affairs 'is no longer justifiable'.¹³ Membership at that time was supposed to be 61, 'plus 1', and 24 of whom were women.¹⁴ By September 1927 there were only 29 men and 16 women of whom only 23 men and 13 women were on the books.¹⁵ In December 1927 the numbers had fallen further with 31 men and 13 women listed but only 25 men and 10 women on 'good on the books with two exceptions'.¹⁶ Putting a gloss on the matters it was agreed that 'The Branch may justify its existence simply because it does exist, the fact that some members found work in other organisations proved the real function of the ILP was being carried out'.¹⁷ The Twelfth Annual Report of the Ilford ILP, for 1928, reflected upon its lapsed member, the chief reason for this being 'Domestic demands' and 'Activities of other organisations'.¹⁸ The West Bromwich ILP, which faced a similar situation, merely recorded in 1933 that 'The apathy of members was shown by their absence'.¹⁹

The records of large branches such as Edinburgh, Manchester, Ilford and Chingford have survived. However, those of important branches such as Halifax barely exist, and the Bradford ILP minutes were lost in the 1970s.²⁰ Notwithstanding such a minimal survival rate of ILP records, many of which are not in themselves complete, and the problems of membership, it is clear that the surviving records provide clues to the driving force behind membership and the annual pattern of activities, and why some members continued in the face of adversity. What emerges is that there was clearly a core of ILP members in most branches for whom we have records, who attempted to live the life of a socialist, made socialism their belief, and almost wallowed in the demanding round of meetings which were designed to spread the message of democratic socialism and promote its political success, albeit a diminishing and dying core as the inter-war years progressed. Committed to citizenship, individual and democratic action, sometimes drawn from a nonconformist background, they were acting in the form of the Quaker maxim of 'as the moment takes me' and eschewed authoritarianism and paternalism in all its forms. A type of partly disciplined democratic anarchism pervaded ILP branches – if the words of discipline and anarchism are not seen as too much of a contradiction. With regional and geographic diversity, ILP branches often developed their own niche identities, which challenges the idea of some type of stereotypical image of a branch member. Moment was, indeed, vital in the thinking of hard-core members of the ILP, and often as important as form, especially when form began to decline with a rising level of election defeats in the 1930s. The strongest of these members and their branches were

able to withstand the impact of disaffiliation in 1932, although this achievement was often based upon the local appeal of charismatic individuals, such as James Maxton (Glasgow), Fred Jowett (Bradford), and Dorothy Jewson (Norwich) in the 1930s, and family hierarchies such as the various branches of the Pughs in Bilston and Birmingham, and the Taylors of Burton-on-Trent.²¹ Beyond them, however, were a large number of members who were infrequent and transient in their commitment, who came into the movement in the 1920s and moved out of the Party in droves in the 1930s, into the Labour Party, the Communist Party of Great Britain, or other Marxist groups.

The driving force of propaganda and education

The most pertinent question that dominates this study of the grass roots branch members of the ILP is – what drove a diminishing core to continue to contribute to branch life during the Great War and the inter-war years? Why did they continue? What did they think? One answer seems to be that with the Labour Party becoming the large democratic socialist organisation by the end of the Great War, ILP members quickly came to see themselves primarily as beacons of socialist education and propaganda, performing a major role and acting as the intellectual godfather of the Labour Party, and the wider British socialist movement, in pursuit of the Socialist Commonwealth. Committed to social democracy, largely through parliamentary methods but also by the 1930s, potentially through revolutionary means driven by workers' action, it followed that branches were geared to financing, promoting and directing their efforts towards municipal and parliamentary activities. The Bilston ILP branch (Midland Division), formed on 4 October 1925 after a preliminary meeting on 17 September 1925, and a letter from J. W. Pugh and W. Jarratt to Fred Longdon, the Midland District organiser, indicated that 'We are desirous of forming an ILP branch in our district. It was formed by 'over 40 out of 50 of our members [who] have never been members of any organisation before' and immediately accepted its propaganda and educational role. Explaining the reasons for this, J. W. Pugh, the Secretary, wrote that

Our aim is to carry out in every detail the main work of the ILP which is the education of the people by means of public meetings and literature and education of the members by means of broad cultural activities. Secondly, the education of the people in the effective use of political and industrial organisations for socialist purposes. In order to achieve this, it initiates and assists in the work of securing several candidates for Parliament and all local governing and strives to strengthen and develop the structured policy of Trade Unions and Co-operative movement in a socialist direction.²²

This presents a holistic view of the work of one ILP branch and its members, in which propaganda and education were normally considered to be the vital work of the branches, even if interest waxed and waned. Indeed, the Bilston ILP was quickly organising open-air meetings in the autumn of 1925, and its first mass

meeting at the Town Hall, Bilston on 5 January 1926, was a visit from 'the great orator Miss Minnie Palister' [Pallister].²³ It also initiated a programme of open-air political meetings on 18 August 1926, and organised Open-Air Society Sunday meetings in Keir Hardie in September 1927.²⁴ Such activities declined towards the end of the 1920s but, subjected to pressure from the Midland Division, it encouraged a new 'spirit' amongst its members, with open-air campaigning in May 1932 by its chairman and secretary A. A. Pugh and J. W. Pugh, respectively. It brought in Fred Longdon to speak at a 'Great Open-Air Meeting' to be held on 18 September 1933; Longdon was a prominent figure in the Midland Division and Chairman of the Birmingham City ILP who had been imprisoned for two years in the Great War as a CO and was considered a 'born orator'.²⁵

The Birmingham City ILP was similarly involved in open-air work as was the Ilford ILP, in what was a ubiquitous activity to ILP branches even if it was not always systematically and enthusiastically carried out.²⁶ The Ilford ILP also stressed that 'The propagandist work of the Branch [is] the real reason for its existence', and although it had not always fulfilled these [its] objectives' they had 'educational value for all those who attended'.²⁷ Indeed, it organised 200 open-air meetings in between March 1924 and March 1925. During that year it also introduced a new organisational structure in the year and 'most members were on 3 committees'.²⁸ However, their activities were not as successful as they wished. Propaganda, the main activity of the branch, was deemed 'just sufficient amount of work done to enable the Branch to be called a Propaganda Party'. Attendances at its outdoor meetings 'have been very poor indeed and at all indoor meetings it has been talking to the converted. In common with many other branches throughout London we have yet to succeed in attracting the public'. Indeed, its socialist party debate got no new members. During the indoor season, September to December, 13 meetings were arranged, one of which had to be abandoned owing to poor attendance. In two meetings even the speakers did not turn up and it was reported that 'We are indebted to Comrade Holmes for filling the breach on two occasions'. Holmes also debated with Mr. Smith, a Conservative, adding 'and our speaker did justice to the branch'. Yet, 'The attendance at Open Air Meetings was disgraceful, even from members of the Branch and if these meetings are to succeed, members must be prepared to make sacrifices in order to make them successful'. Literature distribution of ILP pamphlets and the *New Worker* were part of the activities but

As for the literature the least said. Comrade Taylor, our late Literature Secretary, having resigned more than once, was compelled in spite of pleas from members to finally give up his position owing to lack of support. The Literature is still run on a loss by the branch.

The branch further reflected that

Whether it is possible or not we have to recognise the fact that while we are by number a small Branch, only a small proportion can be really said to be active; at any rate in the ILP interest. The mere payment of subscription, while very necessary, is not sufficient if the ILP is to properly function.²⁹

The failure of many members to become involved in such propaganda work, often throwing the responsibility on to fewer than half the members, drew widespread criticism. In 1921 the Head Office circulars and reports reflected a concern about this problem. The Welsh Divisional Organizing Secretary, R. Morris Wallhead (brother of R. Collingham Wallhead, sometime Chairman of the ILP) stated, along with Comrade Morgan James, that

The whole organisation of some branches is in a very bad condition and in many branches, members are allowed to lapse and drift away on account of bad organisation. One of the chief difficulties in some smaller branches is to get members to attend branch meetings.³⁰

The problem was almost certainly endemic, and in 1927, *Labour's Northern Voice* stressed, of the Lancashire Division and the national ILP, that 'We are a propaganda body, though for our size we ought to be thoroughly ashamed of the propaganda we do'.³¹ T. C. Davenport of the Blackburn and District ILP Federation also felt that propaganda was the duty of branches and, sarcastically announced of his branch,

I am strongly of the opinion that sleeping sickness is present in the branch, and as this is a highly contagious disease, I suggest that a Special Branch meeting be called to appoint an efficient medical officer of health. He might also, when appointed, go to the Guild of Youth, because in view of the absence on the Federation of representatives, it is just possible that infantile paralysis may be rampant amongst them. God knows, I don't!

Regardless of the state their work and the level of commitment, all branches, and some of their members, were involved in a demanding annual round of indoor and outdoor propaganda meetings, and the formation of study circles, linked with ILP policies and the current social and political issues of the day.³² The fact is that being a member of the ILP meant much more to many stalwarts than simply joining a political organisation for electoral success. It was a way of life for the ardent member, with its own cultural form which interwove with, and helped to support, the political and ideological issues of the socialism they advocated – although the fluctuations in membership between 1914 and 1939 indicate that a considerable number of members were temporarily drawn to the ILP by the local and national issues it espoused. Membership of ILP branches married the living of the life of a socialist, as best one could do in a capitalist society, with the demands of winning elections to return socialist candidates in order to bring about the socialism they so desired.

The organisational aspect of branch life, federations and divisions

Despite the commitment to a socialist way of life, ILP members lived in the real world of capitalist politics, poverty and inequality in a society that dictated working within the political system and adopting its styles and conventions. Drawing

from the society in which they operated, where the Liberal and Conservative parties organised through branch systems, the ILP branches and their members maintained a commitment to education and to developing an alternative way of life but also adopted a rhythm of branch life that offered some possibility of electoral success and change within the context of Britain's capitalist society. All branches dovetailed their activities into an annual pattern of events – weekly, fortnightly or monthly branch meetings, sub-committee and group meetings, the annual meeting at the beginning of the year, the appointment of officers, reporting upon membership, organising representation and preparing resolutions for the annual conferences of Federations and Divisions meetings, normally held in January, which would be discussed at the Annual Easter conferences, open-air propaganda meetings, indoor propaganda meetings, the annual municipal contests and the selection of candidates for local and national elections and numerous social activities.

Branch meetings were ubiquitous. The usual format was for the discussion of business, which essentially consisted of going through general correspondence, letters and communications from the Head Office, and discussing membership and the business of raising money through social activities. There was a regularity and tedium about this which meant that many members felt a sense of duty done by attending, although some certainly felt a sense of frustration about the limited activity of the branch. However, even when attempts were made to make the meetings less static and more pro-active, the traditional format remained. Indeed, some members of the West Bromwich ILP put forward a resolution, in September 1925,

That this meeting of ILP members urges Executive Committee to arrange branch business that it shall not require more than an hour to complete same at General Meetings, the remainder of the evening to be devoted to a debate to be chosen each month by branch members.³³

However, another amendment was put forward and carried, moving 'that a special night be fixed for discussion on subjects of National importance'. The amendment was carried with one dissident, and nothing changed. Indeed, the set pattern of branch meetings remained dominant.

Each branch would, of course, have various sub-committees and associated organisations. Edinburgh Central ILP, as with many other branches, had pressed for the women's vote in 1918 and quickly formed a women's committee.³⁴ As indicated in Chapter 3, many ILP branches formed a women's sub-committee or group. Given that the Labour Party had just formed its own women's section, this could cause tensions. The Bilston ILP indicated its intent to form a women's section at a social on Sunday 1 November 1925 when Mrs. Hattie Holland attended as President of the Women's Section of the Labour Party. It is clear that this was not welcome, and the attempt to raise money for the development through a concert created tensions, because 'We were effectively boycotted by the local Labour Party in respect to our concert and the selling of tickets on Monday November 16th when a delegation from the ILP went to see Mr. Sam Hague about same'. At

an EC meeting it was resolved 'That we carry on as though they did not exist and inform Headquarters at once of their attitude towards us'.³⁵ Nevertheless, these women's groups could have a very powerful presence in the local ILP branches, as was the case for the Auchiairn ILP, which in 1929 boasted a membership of 60 men and 60 women and claimed a good proportion of women on the Executive Committee.³⁶ Bilston ILP formed a women's group through the auspices of Miss Minnie Palister (Pallister), on 24 November 1925.³⁷ Very quickly, Bilston fell into the pattern of women's group meetings and annual meetings.³⁸ Indeed, the Women's group was to play a large part in organising the social programme and whist drives. The Bilston women's sub-committee, dominated by Mrs. Pugh, informed the Women's Labour Party regarding a whist drive to be organised at Bradley Memorial Hut in November 1927.³⁹ The group organised a whist drive and a social, with 'Mrs. Holland, in January 1928'.⁴⁰ The Bo'ness ILP women's group also organised a bazaar in April 1927 and, with the Labour Party and the Bo'ness Trades Council helped to form a joint committee to ensure that there was a representative body of women in every district of Bo'ness – and they contributed to the eight women chosen, two from each of the West, Town, East and South districts of Bo'ness.⁴¹ At the end of 1928 it organised a 'Cake and Candy' social, taking £16 5s 9d which, after expenses of £2 6s 6d, raised the handsome sum of £13 19s 9d for branch funds.⁴² Women's groups also supplied members for municipal and parliamentary elections; Mrs. Hattie Holland was put forward as ILP candidate for the New Town Ward of Bilston in 1926, as were many women for many other wards, and Dorothy Jewson, apart from being one of the two MPs for Norwich between 1923 and 1924, stood and was defeated for Parliament in 1924, 1929 and 1931, but was a councillor for Norwich between 1929 and 1936.⁴³ The Chingford Women's Group seems to have had about 18, though possibly more, members in the late 1920s, and organised a few outings to raise money, but was pro-active in political matters; particularly opposing the Trades Dispute and Trade Union Bill of 1927, which was designed to make general strikes illegal and to force trade union members to opt into paying subscriptions to the Labour Party rather than opt out. It referred to Clause II of the Bill as 'The Blackleg Protection clause'.⁴⁴

Local ILP branches often retained remnants of organisation from the pre-1914 ILP as well as developing new organisations. Most obviously, there were 50 Socialist Sunday Schools, and five in the process of formation, in 1921, and Ilford ILP organised one such school with 26 members in 1922, 'The Movement gave the children an elementary education in Socialism. The schools being non-theological and no one is removed without the say of the Committee'.⁴⁵ The School, developed under the guidance of Comrade Rose and Comrade Norwood, had 35 on the books in 1926 and 24 on the books in 1928, with 'only 5 due to remove', organised teaching and Christmas parties.⁴⁶ However, as with many Socialist Sunday Schools, it faded away and 'was discontinued owing to lack of support' in March 1928.

Other remnants of socialist organisations from the past also continued into the inter-war years. The Manchester Central ILP Branch, often known as the Manchester Clarion Café branch, operated alongside the Clarion Club, and Ilford ILP

also had a Clarion Social Club.⁴⁷ West Bromwich ILP still offered Labour Church Services in 1933, despite the fact that the movement had effectively died out by the turn of the century and was technically a separate organisation from the ILP.⁴⁸ There were also survivals of the relationship between the ILP and the Clarion cycling movement which through the auspices of the *Clarion* newspaper and had more than 10,000 cyclists and offered financial arrangements for the purchase of Clarion cycles before the Great War. The Clarion Hut on Otley Chevin, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and the Clarion House on the side Pendle Hill, near Nelson, which Fenner Brockway felt was one of those local meeting places which became a 'national institution', continued to provide a base for meetings and overnight accommodation for cyclist and ramblers as they toured the countryside, often distributing socialist literature and newspapers in the process.⁴⁹

Alongside such vanishing remnants of the past were new organisations which often tied in with the local branches. The most obvious, already referred to, was the Guild of Youth formed in 1924 and which grew to 171 branches by the end of 1925. They were, in theory, independent bodies but were tied in with the ILP, having representatives on the local branches, using the facilities and good offices of the local ILP branches. There had, indeed, been pressure from local branches to have such youth organisations from the early 1920s, the Southall ILP meeting to discuss the conditions of young people in 1922 and organising socials for young people, 'one to be along propaganda lines'.⁵⁰ It has been suggested that most national Guild of Youth movements struggled from the start, and this was certainly the case with the West Bromwich Guild which was seeking support from its formation in 1925 and asking for financial aid, receiving £2 in aid in 1927.⁵¹ The Ilford ILP formed its Guild of Youth in 1927 with 26 members, though it had fallen to 14 members a year later, 'some not paid up'.⁵² The Bo'ness ILP did not form a Guild of Youth branch until the end of 1931, and then with only 17 members, less than a year ahead of the branch leaving the ILP after its disaffiliation from the Labour Party.⁵³ The national Guild of Youth organisation struggled on and, as indicated in Chapter 3, was associated with radicalism, its members usually symbolically wearing red shirts at ILP Annual Easter Conferences, and fell under the influence of communism in the early 1930s before such tendencies were expunged from the organisation under the tight control of Maxton and the NAC in the late 1930s. By that time many branches, like that at Parkhead, were struggling to find new members.⁵⁴

The ILP branches, and both their old and new auxiliary organisations, were invariably drawn into the ongoing local federations within the nine divisions of the ILP. In 1919, the Lancashire Division consisted of 16 federations, the dominant ones of which were the Manchester and Salford Federation and the Liverpool Federation.⁵⁵ There was a proliferation of federations within other divisions of the ILP and some, such as the mid-Glasgow Federation, became prominent because of their city's rising importance within the national ILP.⁵⁶ The result was that branches had to send delegates to these federations, which normally met twice a year, at the annual and half-yearly meetings of the Division along with delegates from the branches.

Even for the average ILP member, branch membership could mean a considerable commitment to at least 12 branch meetings per year, and often more numerous sub-committee and group meetings, and the possibility of being sent to Federation meetings twice per year – even assuming that he or she was not connected with the Guild of Youth or a Women's Committee. Combine these with the organising of the annual May Day celebrations, flag days, revivalist rallies, socials, lectures and propaganda meetings, few active members would have escaped a weekly commitment to the ILP and officials would have been faced with high weekly commitments. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that the membership was often transient, particularly when intransigence and conflict, at the national and international level, as already indicated, divided the National Party on domestic or international issues.

For the exceptionally committed member, the situation was even more demanding for they might find themselves attending a meeting of one of the nine divisions of the ILP. This involved work at annual and half-yearly meetings, and the selection of one representative to the NAC, which means that some individuals became even more deeply entrenched in time-consuming ILP politics. These included the likes of Elijah J. Sandham for Lancashire, Dorothy Jewson from Norwich for the East Anglia Division, James Maxton for the Scottish Division, and others, who also became key figures at the national level.⁵⁷ Here they would be involved with the NAC of the ILP which, through Headquarters and subject to the Conference, would pass information down to the branches through the divisional representatives – although there was a reverse process whereby branches, federations and divisions could instruct the NAC, and later the Executive Committee and the IE that emerged in the 1930s. Indeed, there was a sort of checks and balances in which the branches might respond to national decisions but could reject such decisions. Branch members, and particularly active ones, were thus drawn into an immensely democratic and fluid environment in which opinions were sharply divided, in which individualism thrived, and in which attitudes fluctuated widely.

As became clear throughout the 1920s, branches and divisions within the ILP could vary greatly in their commitment to parliamentary and revolutionary activity, their commitment to the Labour Party or their hope of an alliance with communism. The fluctuations in the power of the regions, the Great War, and the defections of many RPC branches in London, Unity branches in Lancashire and Scottish branches in the 1930s certainly changed and amplified the dynamics of ILP politics throughout the inter-war years in the pursuit of democratic socialist politics.

'That many roads lead to Rome': the wider world of socialist, communist, worker and Labour Party politics

ILP branches and their members were keenly concerned to be part of the wider and socialist and political network in their own community and areas, particularly working with the Labour Party and the communist party in a pattern of interconnections which often reflected the changing patterns of national politics. Indeed,

after the Great War, they were particularly concerned about their position once the Labour Party had a socialist constitution and the need to take hope from the Russian revolutions of 1917. At that moment, some members felt that the ILP should merge into the Labour Party whilst others, as already suggested, contemplated joining the Third International and, in the ILP manner, sought to bring about local socialist unity. This latter idea was very evident in Manchester. A Conference of socialist members of the Engineering Shop Stewards' Committee held a meeting on 25 September 1918 at the BSP Hall, Margaret Street, Higher Openshaw, Manchester, to organise joint action by branches of the ILP, SLP, BSP, SPGB, Workers' Socialist Federation, Women's Industrial League and unattached Socialist branches within a 20-mile radius of Manchester.⁵⁸ The purpose of the meeting was 'to form a Revolutionary Organization Committee with the object of forming a National Revolutionary Party' as distinct from a 'Reformist Party' in order to take advantage of conditions that arise 'to establish a Socialist Commonwealth'. Two members of the Manchester Central Clarion Café ILP were sent to the British Socialist Party BSP Conference.⁵⁹ Driven on by this experience, Mrs. Findley, one of the representatives, wrote to a Miss Robinson, stating that

I cannot help feeling that our branch makes a great mistake to hold aloof from other socialist organisations that have the same goal in view as we have, but do not always take the same road as we do, to arrive there.

I do not want to lose our idealism or desert our principles. [I] Truly want brotherly feeling and cooperation wherever possible.

If we are content to sit and talk platitudes and pin our faith simply and solely, as many of us do, to political action alone, forgetting that we must tend to conservatism, when we recognise 'that many roads lead to Rome' we still fail to draw into our organisation the young and the enthusiastic men and women, who feel that there is as much in industrial action properly directed, as in political action and who think that we might act in conjunction with these organisations on every possible occasion; as long as our principles are not deserted.

I plead for cooperation whenever we find it possible because I am afraid, we commit political suicide if we don't.

We must demonstrate to the outside that the progressive forces care and will unite to realise a common goal. If we do not sink our differences as occasions arise, we shall never reach that Socialist Commonwealth which all are striving after. We must stand united and head a united revolutionary movement.

I hope that Comrade Ashley will be supported and the decision will be fruitful.⁶⁰

Comrade Donald H. Ashley, referred to in this letter, was promoting the creation of the United Socialist Council (Manchester District), which arose from a BSP meeting. The problem was that it specifically excluded Reformist parties but Ashley still recommended that 'This Branch of the ILP affiliate with the local Branch

of the USC in-so-far as the USC principles and policy agree with the ILP'.⁶¹ In the end, this alliance broke down, for the ILP was seeking to bring together both revolutionary and reformist parties.

This action by the Manchester Clarion Café ILP proved to be just one of several attempts to work with the wider socialist and labour movement to bring about a Socialist Commonwealth through socialist unity, especially once relations with the Labour Party soured. The ILP Glasgow Federation had also sought to work with the United Socialist Council in 1917, although the ILP made it clear that it intended to contest every parliamentary seat available.⁶² The Oldham ILP put forward a resolution to the ILP Annual Easter Conference of 1919 advocating a 'true Socialist Commonwealth is by the amalgamation of all socialist bodies'.⁶³ At the national level the performance of the two minority Labour governments, of 1924 and 1929–1931, clearly led ILP branches to be critical of the Labour Party and to anticipate relations with other political parties or vote for disaffiliation, as has become clear in this history of the ILP. Also, local difficulties and personal animosities were often behind such moves. As already noted, the ostracisation of ILP women's groups by some Labour Women's groups occurred in some areas. More often there were local election issues where the ILP was appalled at the local and national actions of the Labour Party and its two minority governments and played up its approval of other groups, and particularly the CPGB. This was most evident in Birmingham, where the ILP's Federation, a particularly left-wing organisation, was attracted to communism.

The Birmingham City ILP passed a resolution in September 1924 against the Labour Party in West Birmingham who 'are attempting to force upon the rank and file a candidate who they do not want, that this is having a very injurious effect on the whole of the movement and the position should be reconsidered'.⁶⁴ It was also involved in the Birmingham Hands of Russia Committee and the Birmingham Hands off Egypt demonstrations at this time, which were not fully supported by the Labour Party.⁶⁵ Almost a year later it complained that the actions of Mr. O. G. Wilbey (possibly Willey) of the Labour Party, in West Birmingham, were 'secretive and undemocratic'.⁶⁶ At broadly the same time there was a palpable intimacy growing with the Birmingham City ILP, which was veering towards working with the communist party and, just before the coal dispute and the General Strike of 1926, passed a resolution agreeing to operate with the Birmingham Communist Party in 'putting a Joint Manifesto in favour of the embargo on coal and appoints three members to meet three members of the Communist Party'; they being Messrs Southall, Solway and Sugar.⁶⁷ At this moment, Birmingham Central ILP and the Sparkhill ILP (also in Birmingham) were supporting the ILP affiliation to the Third International, even though the negotiations between the ILP and the Third International had foundered.⁶⁸ Just over a year later, the Birmingham City ILP sent two delegates to the Emergency Conference of the Minority Movement, an auxiliary trade union body of the CPGB, as it passed a resolution condemning the Borough Labour Party 'in refusing a delegate from a Trades Union on the ground of he being a Communist, as being a violation of the Constitution of the Labour Party as laid down in Margate'.⁶⁹ It passed an almost identical resolution

on 3 November 1927, and on 5 July 1928 supported Maxton and Cook in their failed Manifesto attempts to create a new organisational force to bring about socialism in Britain. It was to later condemn the second Labour government and suggested that 'the Labour Party acts not to defend the poor but to defend the rich from the just causes of the poor', adding further criticism of the Imperial policy cruelty and tyranny that it had endorsed in the colonies and India.⁷⁰ In effect, the Birmingham City branch, and the Birmingham Federation of which it was a part, were criticising the Labour Party, with a view to disaffiliating, at the same time as its general tenor was to look with favour at improved relations and co-operation with the communist party, to the point of affiliation with the Third International.

Nevertheless, such associations were very largely based upon regional and divisional differences. The criticism of the Labour Party and the support for the Third International and communism varied from time to time and place to place and was supported by many London branches in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but opposed strongly by the powerfully entrenched Lancashire ILP branches, drawn into the Unity Movement, and even the dominating Norwich branch in the late 1930s.

The association with the local community, however, normally went far beyond simply trying to ally with other socialist groups. This was evident, as already established, in the Great War when the Glasgow ILP identified with the rent strikes in its area and when the ILP became involved in the tenant disputes in Lancashire. Indeed, such connections enhanced the local prestige of the ILP and were, indeed, the platform for its local and municipal campaigns. The willingness to address such issues was important, whilst the failure to do so was potentially damaging. For instance, as already established, the Glasgow ILP was facing difficulties during the Spanish Civil War when the ILP supported the Republican Government in the face of a Catholic community concerned about the mistreatment and murder of Catholics priests by the Republicans in Spain.

The association with trade unionism and local trade unionism could also be important. In the 1890s the ILP had considered itself to be on one side of the trade unions coin and encouraged all of its members to be members of trade unions if that was possible. Much of that trade union support was lost to the Labour Representation Committee/Labour Party from 1900 onwards, and during the early part of the Great War. Some of that was retrieved at the end of the Great War, but during the inter-war years, the ILP had limited purchase power within the trade union movement. Prominent figures like Fred Jowett in Bradford, once an official in the Power-Loom Overlookers' Union, could still attract support, and the Bradford District Trades and Labour Council was still dominated by joint members of the ILP and the Labour Party. However, disaffiliation changed the situation by ensuring that many trade unionists transferred their total allegiance to the Labour Party at a time when the ILP was in disarray. The thinness of the link with trade unionism became all too evident, and in 1935 the Party decided to establish a central Industrial Organiser and each division would establish an Industrial Committee and appoint an Industrial Organiser.⁷¹ Most divisions had made their appointment in 1935 and, after the Keighley Annual ILP Conference of 1936, a

National Industrial Committee was set up with Trevor Davies, of Wales, as the National Industrial Co-ordinator.⁷² However, these actions seemed to make little difference, undoubtedly as a result of the parlous state of the ILP by the end of the 1930s, with only small levels of representation on the unions. In Cumberland, Tom Stephenson achieved some influence within the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, becoming Financial Secretary of the Cumberland Miners' Association in May 1937.⁷³ Marjorie Peake, of the Preston ILP, was elected to the Executive of the Post Office Workers' Union in 1935 and later became the Union Assistant Secretary. More famously, George Buchanan, the ILP MP, was President of the United Patternmakers' Association at the time of the ILP's disaffiliation from the Labour Party. Yet even though the ILP had a trade union presence at both the national and the local level, often supporting local strike action by unions, it is clear that the numbers and influence were limited. Nevertheless, this added the range of experience of the ILP members, diversifying the prosopography of branch membership.

A penchant for whist drives, jumble sales and potato pie suppers: the social and cultural activities of branch life and halls

Financially supporting the branch life and broad socialist activities of ILP branches, the ubiquitous fund-raising activities of the social sub-committee was so vital to the continuation of branches. Most of the surviving ILP branch records testify to the immense efforts that were put into a wide variety of money-raising social and leisure activities by members, and the homely atmosphere that was created. John Lochore, a Scottish ILPer who left the ILP in 1935 for the CPGB, acknowledged the ILP's social activities.

There was a lot of socialising in the ILP. This was one of the great advantages of the ILP. . . . It was done from a socialist point of view. This was one of the things I advocated when I did eventually join the Communist Party. . . . We started working for setting up branches so that the Party could get in local people and make it more of a family, homely type of thing, like the ILP.⁷⁴

The dominating social and fund-raising activity was the whist drive. Bilston ILP minutes record a regular round of whist drives and socials, often held at the Memorial Hut at Bradley or the Pavilion, Bradley, one of them aimed at selling up to 150 tickets, and offering a whist drive followed by a dance on 21 April 1928.⁷⁵ It reported that the whist drive would be at 7 pm, and followed by a dance at 9 pm, and Comrade A. Holland would be the MC. Chingford South ILP reported on its whist drives, as did most other branches. In many cases, as with Bilston and Chingford, they were organised by women members, such as Mrs. Pugh in the case of Bilston and Miss Arnell in the case of Chingford South.⁷⁶ The Chingford and Higham Park ILP Social Committee raised £27 17s 2 of its £46 6s 9d income in 1932/1933 through whist drives alone.⁷⁷ Birmingham East raised £18 10s 8.5d

from whist drives in the year ending February 1920 from a total income of £93 17s 4.5d, and Eastbourne ILP raised £88 16s 6d in the year ending February 1938 out of a total income of £206 11s 0.5d.⁷⁸ Glasgow Federation also raised £34 12s 6d from whist drives in the year to the end of February 1932 from a total income of just over £1,012.⁷⁹ Launceston ILP Account Book indicates that £17 19s, of £23 11s 8d of its income for a year, that is not indicated, was raised from whist drives.⁸⁰ Leith ILP raised £140 4s 9d, from a total income of £704 10s in 1929 by whist drives alone. Although many of these activities raised only £2 or £3, over the course of a year the financial return could be a significant addition to the incomes of ILP organisations that were struggling for the money to keep the branch and its activities going and whose membership fees were often paltry in contrast.

This income was supplemented by jumble sales that seem to have been the second most common fund-raising activity, with the small Bridlington ILP raising 18 shillings through them in 1929, Hutchesontown (Glasgow Gorbals area) £3 between 1929 to 1930, and Leyton ILP raising £8 4s 2d in 1920.⁸¹ To some, it must have seemed as though a British social and political revolution was being financed on the back of whist drives and jumble sales.

A third common activity was the use of raffles to raise small sums of money with, for instance, Shettleston raising £3 14s 2s in March 1926 and Erith ILP raising six shillings through raffles between 1929 and 1930.⁸² Beyond this was a panoply of social activities offering both leisure and income for ILP branches and their members. Dances were organised by Leyton ILP, and the Manchester Central Café ILP had a penchant for potato suppers; Shettleston organised flag days and steak and pie nights, and the Glasgow Federation held theatre nights which raised £10 19s 10d in 1931 and £26 10s 0d in 1930 and 1931 respectively.⁸³ Bilston ILP reported on holding a public meeting on 3 October 1928 to be given by John Scurr MP and John Beckett MP, at which there would be a musical recital from 7 pm to 7.30 pm by the Cesar French Symphony in D Minor.⁸⁴ It was also fairly common to organise a day outing, indeed, annual day outings for the members to the countryside or the seaside. In 1924, Ilford organised a 'Clarion Social Club outing on 13 July to Thorpe's Bay by Saloon Coach and train to Thorpe Bay returning for tea to Labour stalls', and Bilston ILP held an Annual Half-Day Trip on Saturday 18 August 1928.⁸⁵ On 11 February 1930 the Glasgow Socialist Club was 'making arrangements for badminton, tennis (table and lawn) and golf clubs'. The nucleus of a dramatic group had been formed in many areas, most obviously at Jowett Hall, Bradford, on the site of the present Bradford Playhouse, where the local ILP performed their dramatic productions, and an Arts Guild was also formed to stimulate the intellectual life of the Bradford ILP.⁸⁶

Gidon Cohen has focused attention on the immense range of social and leisure activities that the Glasgow ILP branches offer. He argues that the extensive political activity of the Glasgow ILP branches and Federation were supported by a thriving range of social activities 'which played a significant part on both the ILP aspirations and self-perception'.⁸⁷ Indeed,

the surviving cashbook of Bridgeton branch give a flavour of the range of events including organised social and parties, usually accompanied by food and a band, a dancing class, plays for the membership, and more usual activities such as jumble sales and election victory meetings.

He also draws particular attention to the organised day trips, such as sailing on Lock Lomond from Glasgow to Broomielaw to empty sewage. The sludge boat took sewage on a regular basis, and the ILP took advantage of this and organised regular outings for as many as 150 members at a time, and all the 'old women from Brighton Cross would go and have their day out down the river on the boat'.⁸⁸ These leisure activities often had a political purpose, and the Glasgow ILP organised groups to travel around the Highlands, visiting under-privileged or delinquent boys who had been put out to crofters by the town council, to make sure that they had not been exploited.⁸⁹ Glasgow ILP Cycling Corp was involved as well, and Jack Taylor, the Scottish cycling champion of 1937 who cycled outside Glasgow each Saturday to deliver the *New Leader*, in the wake of the ILP and Clarion social activities of the 1890s and early twentieth century.

The Keighley ILP provides a rare glimpse of how what was a ubiquitous activity in ILP branches fed into the culture, finance and politics of a local ILP branch. The Minutes of the Social Committee of the Keighley ILP survive for the period September 1918 to 1 July 1924. They indicate that the Social Committee was dominated by the women members – Mrs. Bland, Mrs. Lightowler, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Umpley – and were focused upon arrangements for buying sweets and cards, and arranging dinners and teas, a Holiday Fund and 'That 3s 6d for dinner and 2s 6d tea be booked for Chara Bang trip'.⁹⁰ The annual general meetings reveal how successful these activities were and how vital such activities were to branch finances. Although the financial statements are not always presented fully, year in and year out, in 1926 £237 5s 7.5d of the branch income of £442 15s 8d came from the Social Committee. The respective figures for 1928 were £161 14s and £210 10s 4.5d; for 1933 £65 4s 6d and £117 7s 6d; and for 1937 £39 4s 1d and £132 7s 7d.⁹¹ In other words, in the late 1920s, 60 per cent to 75 per cent of the branch income came from social activities. By the 1930s the proportion had varied between 30 per cent and 45 per cent. This was against a background of a dramatic decline of the branch in the 1930s, when overall income levels fell by more than 65 per cent and the contribution of social activities was down to around a sixth of the level in the 1920s.

The vast majority of these social, political activities, as well as administrative activities, almost invariably took place in a small rented accommodation, ILP branches additionally using rented town halls, guild halls and memorial halls for their large indoor meetings. However, Cohen has suggested that ownership of its own premises was a significant feature of the long survival of a branch, effectively giving a focus for members. This, as he notes, was obviously relevant to the Norwich ILP branch which owned a club and the Keir Hardie Hall, which seated 500, committee rooms and other facilities which were used by the ILP, Labour organisations and trade unions. It had a bookshop and had facilities for the writing and printing of

a local supplement of the *New Leader*, which was selling about 600 copies per week in the mid-1930s.⁹² The largest branch of the ILP after disaffiliation in 1932 – with 900 or more members by 1939 which constituted about 40 per cent of national ILP membership – the Norwich branch of over 700 in 1947 then fell overnight to nine when it lost Keir Hardie Hall.⁹³ Cohen also draws attention to the South Bank ILP (Middlesbrough), which succeeded in purchasing its own premises in 1937, and the Nelson ILP which eventually sold its premises to the Labour Party in 1934. From this evidence, he suggests that the ILP clubs needed their own premises to survive. This is a reasonable estimation based upon limited information, but the situation was far more complex than that. On the whole, branches, which were generally small and temporary in nature, could not afford to own their own premises, and only the larger ILP branches owned, or sought to own, their own property, which they often found to be a major financial burden. It is these latter branches that declined in the mid-1930s as the ILP's membership plummeted and as bitter disputes occurred over the ownership of premises, offices and halls, in the wake of disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1932, and it is clear that departing ILP branches who then left the ILP took their premises with them. There was a problem of collective ownership between the ILP, Labour Party and trade unions in many cases.

Indeed, there were only a few branches like Norwich with the membership and financial wherewithal to afford to run their own premises and a hall. One of the most successful was Bradford ILP which formed a company, the Labour Institute Ltd, to purchase its premises on Peckover Street, Bradford, at the beginning of the twentieth century. It held 1,300 shares of a company capitalised at £12,000 with 11,500 shares, and appealed for £200 to purchase 200 shares, 'with 400 to be held in hand'.⁹⁴ It later purchased the old Temperance Hall, Chapel Street, Bradford, which had been a cinema between 1900 and 1922, opening it in 1924, and fully owning it from 1927, and operating it until it burnt down in April 1935. This was then named Jowett Hall, after Fred Jowett, and was used by the ILP for socials, concerts and entertainment, although there was a dispute over who owned the property in 1932. The property was bought and rebuilt by the Bradford Playhouse Company, which also rented Jowett Hall from the ILP from its formation in 1929 until the hall was burned down. Financial help from J. B. Priestley, the playwright, ensured that the hall was bought and re-opened as the Bradford Playhouse in 1937.⁹⁵ By that time, the 1,600 members of the ILP of 1918, risen to 2,377 members in 1927, had faded away to fewer than 200 of the 400 or so ILP members who were still active in Yorkshire in the mid-1930s.⁹⁶ Elsewhere, the Manchester City ILP had a controlling stake in the Clarion Café which it rented out to many groups.⁹⁷ The Blackburn ILP had its own Labour Institute, on Frederick Street, Blackburn.⁹⁸ The Ilford ILP sought to buy its own Labour Hall in 1925,

The outline of the scheme was that a Company be formed under the Friendly Society's Act, Shares would be taken up which bear interest in any profit forth coming with any donations. It was thought that upwards of £2- would cover the expenses of the meeting.⁹⁹

The Hutchesonton (Glasgow Branch) rented out its hall in the year 1929–1930 and raised an income of £93 17s 6d.¹⁰⁰ In the early 1920s the Shettleston ILP started raising money for the purchase of a hall and raised £1,583 5s 8d before acquiring grounds and building through a ‘right of deed’.¹⁰¹ However, the Shettleston branch seemed to be in a constant struggle to maintain the hall and in March 1936 was discussing ways to ‘raise £400 for the Hall’.¹⁰² The Limehouse ILP branch circulated a request for financial support to build up its own premises, though many replied negatively, as did the Birmingham City ILP which stated that Birmingham West cannot help because ‘we have a need of a building of our own’.¹⁰³

Several other ILP branches, such as Bridlington, Ilford and Keighley were in a constant battle to buy and maintain their hall.¹⁰⁴ The Ilford branch reported that ‘All branch activities depended upon the reduction of the Hall debt and the debt was the bugbear affecting Propagandist and social activities’.¹⁰⁵ It was a similar, though less fraught situation, for the Keighley ILP, which appears to have acquired its own hall and rooms at the end of the Great War, with a loan, or mortgage, of about £500 from the Keighley and Craven Building Society. By October 1925 it was still indebted to the tune of £336 7s 11d and, through subscription payments, of between £19 and £80 year after year, was able to pay off the debt by 1935.¹⁰⁶ Whilst payments were being made, the Buildings Treasurer regularly recorded income from booking of the rooms of around £70 to £90 per year, with a balance of around £40 or £50 each year. After paying off the debt, the local branch built up a balance of £145 2s 5d, including an income of £93 16s 10d in 1937. This has to be considered a quite successful record of achievement given that the Keighley ILP suffered a great loss of members after 1932.¹⁰⁷

The evidence is far from clear but, to surmise, there arise three main points about the ILP ownership of property. First, the vast majority of the small ILP branches rented accommodations because there was no way in which their membership could justify or raise the vast expenditures required to own their own premises. Many of these branches came and went without the cementing and unifying power of owning a hall or premises to keep the membership together, as Cohen has suggested for the Norwich ILP. Secondly, it was the larger ILP branches that sought to own their own premises and halls, and there were comparatively very few of those. Thirdly, even these larger ILP branches found it difficult to hold on to their premises when the support for the ILP fell dramatically in the 1930s and their financial position became parlous. The continued imperative of owning one’s own premises was difficult for a few branches and their resolute members, whose financial burden to remain solvent stretched them, and their commitment, to the limits. The majority of ILP branches conducted their social and fund-raising leisure activities to keep going in rented premises.

Divisional growth and decline: membership, policy and electoral activity

Membership clearly was always a problem for the ILP as it waxed and waned between 1914 and 1939. The figures presented in earlier chapters, tentative as

they may be, suggest that the Party had around 40,000 members in 1914, about 27,000 in 1916, around 35,000 in 1918 and between 35,000 and 50,000 in the mid-1920s, before membership fell to 16,773 members in 1932 and 2,441 in 1939.¹⁰⁸ This fluctuation and then the decline of membership meant that ILP Divisions, Federations and branches rose and fell in importance and dramatically in numbers and, as we have seen, more than three-quarters of the branches of the early 1920s had disappeared by the mid- and late-1930s. Many of the branches did not pay membership fees in the 1920s, and it is clear that this became less common in the 1930s; Cohen points to a survey in 1935 that indicated that only 100 of the 284 remaining branches provided all three of the basic requirements of a branch – paying membership fees, operating the Power Fund and selling the *New Leader*. Most branches sold the paper, but 25 had no contact with the Head Office. By the middle of 1938, only 124 branches out of 220 were paying affiliation fees.¹⁰⁹ This was despite the organisational work of the nine appointed organisers of the divisions, which, in 1921, includes the likes of John Arnott for Yorkshire, Herbert T. Hime for the Midlands and R. Morris Wallhead for Wales (started 21 February 1921), and Harry Stoddart for North Wales.¹¹⁰

The fortunes of the different divisions of the ILP changed remarkably in the Great War and the inter-war years, greatly shaped by a changing pattern of national events, but also the political environment that members operated in also changed dramatically. The nine ILP Divisions and their branches, faced a changing emphasis of importance throughout the 25 years covered by this study. Whilst Bradford and Yorkshire, and London, dominated the politics of pre-1914, the growth area of influence during the Great War was Clydeside and Scotland which, in the 1930s, gave way to Norwich – developments which themselves reflect the changing nature of local politics and the importance of the individuals and their family and social networks. A brief examination of the Yorkshire Division, and an even briefer one of Scotland and the Eastern Division (including Norwich), makes the point.

In the early years of our period, Yorkshire was the most important ILP Division. In 1921, John Arnott, organiser for the Yorkshire Divisional Council (supported by Ben Riley the Chairman), informed the NAC that it had 41 branches, with 5,738 men and 1,862 women, a total membership of 7,600, of whom 5,901 were ‘good on the books’, with 3,991 stamps issued.¹¹¹ The division was largely one committed to parliamentary action, and Arnott added in his report that the split away of ILPers to leave Labour and work with the communists at the beginning of the 1920s had little impact and was only a problem for Shipley, Mexborough and Woodhouse, and that ‘In some of these branches there are a few left wingers but the total number is not large’. Although the membership figures are immensely malleable in how they were composed and interpreted, it is clear that the Bradford branch, and all its clubs, was the most important ILP branch with about a third of the Yorkshire membership at any time. This was a product of the enormous local activity that went on, encouraged by the prominent figures of the region. Fred Jowett and Willie Leach of Bradford, Mrs. Pinchbeck of Leeds, A. V. Williams of Woodhouse ILP branch, Leeds, Ben Riley of Dewsbury and R. Brown of Shipley

addressed numerous conferences and gave innumerable lectures. Indeed, there was considerable activity throughout Yorkshire in January 1923 when the ILP mounted its 'National Winter Campaign for Socialism'. The membership of even the smaller branches began to rise: the Crossgates ILP, Leeds, reported a rise of 72 to 79 members at its annual meeting in February 1926.¹¹² The Shipley ILP branch, despite some difficulties in the early 1920s, was re-formed in January 1926.¹¹³

How pervasive this atmosphere was is difficult to judge, and how many dedicated activists there were is even more difficult to assess, especially given the limited number of branch records that survive for Yorkshire. However, there is a hint of the local vitality of the ILP's growth in Bradford. In 1926, the *Bradford Pioneer* noted the renewed enthusiasm for the ILP, the growth of membership and the galvanising of the organisation:

The reaction after the exalted Pacifism of war time is passing. . . . The ILP was accused a little while ago of lacking intellectual life. As soon as the justice of the suggestion was realized it began to be repaired. The ILP started to develop Heathmount Hall and made a success of it. The ILP started an Arts Guild and made a success of it. . . . A study class has been decided upon.¹¹⁴

The Yorkshire branches, and particularly Bradford, performed well in the parliamentary and the municipal level between 1918 and 1929. The 1918 general election saw no ILP parliamentary victories but Tom Myers was the Spen Valley by-election in 1919, and five MPs – William Leach (Bradford Central), Fred Jowett (Bradford East), Philip Snowden (Colne Valley), Ben Riley (Dewsbury), Hastings Lees Smith (Keighley) – won seats in the 1922 general election. Riley and Smith were not returned in the 1923 general election, but the other three were returned – although three others, James Hudson (Huddersfield) – Cecil Wilson (Sheffield Attercliffe) and Arthur Ponsonby (Sheffield Brightside) are often loosely described as being ILP MPs when they were not. In 1929 Leach and Jowett were returned as usual – with Hudson (Huddersfield), T. W. Stamford (Leeds West) and Arthur Ponsonby (Sheffield Brightside) often listed as ILPers, although they were sponsored mainly by the Labour Party. The problems of calculating municipal success are even more difficult because the ILP and Labour councillors were often just described as Labour councillors. However, labour more or less doubled the number of councillors it had in the textile district of the West Riding of Yorkshire between 1913 and 1929, and all 32 Bradford Labour councillors in 1932 were described as being both Labour and ILP.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding such resilience, it is clear that the ILP branches of the textile of the West Riding of Yorkshire were no longer as potent as they had been before the war, as the Labour Party became more dominant and as other divisions, such as Scotland, Lancashire and London, began to challenge and overtake it – though the challenge of the last two areas faded away as the Norwich branch began to emerge in the East Anglia Division. Apart from Fred Jowett, Philip Snowden and John Arnott at the national level, and Ben Riley and Willie Leach at the local level, few of the ILP leaders in Yorkshire made much impact

on the history of the ILP, most being content to work as the 'soft left' parliamentary group who wished to work with the Labour Party. This means that they were divided on the issue of withdrawing from the Second International and critical of the unsuccessful attempt to commit to the Third International. Indeed, Clifford Allen, who was supporting the idea of negotiating with the Third International, gained a bitter rebuke from the correspondent from the *Bradford Pioneer* attending the conference: 'He is a young man of saintly pose who cannot resist the temptation of displaying his very effective voice and manner when he has no opinion to voice'.¹¹⁵ The conflict with the national mood of the ILP continued further when the Bradford ILP offered the 'Bradford Alternative' of parliamentary rule to the emerging guild socialist constitution at the 30th Annual ILP Conference in April 1922, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Throughout the 1920s, the Bradford and Yorkshire ILPers, as already indicated, remained resolutely committed to municipal and parliamentary socialism, were often critical of the 'Socialism in Our Time' policy as some form of retreat from socialism, and generally committed to the Labour Party. Despite Jowett's advocacy of disaffiliation, most agreed with Willie Leach in his view that the ILP needed to remain within the Labour Party, a claim which is endorsed by the fact that when disaffiliation occurred, 31 of the 32 Bradford ILP councillors joined the Labour Party. Shorn of its municipal and parliamentary influence, who remained within the Labour Party, the Bradford ILP and the Yorkshire Division supported Jowett's commitment to the new and amorphous revolutionary policy. Thereafter the Yorkshire Division membership and that of Bradford dwindled. Jowett, owing to a faithful following, did contest Bradford East constituency in the 1935 general election, receiving 8,983 votes, 26.7 per cent of the vote, but came second to Joseph Hepworth, the Conservative candidate who had 11,131 votes, though he beat Wilfred Heywood, the Labour Party candidate, who with 7,329 votes finished in third place. This would normally have been a safe Labour seat, as became evident in the 1945 general election, but whilst the Bradford ILP could win little in local elections, Jowett's appeal clearly went well beyond his immediate ILP supporters.

At the municipal level, the ILP achieved only patchy and limited successes in Keighley and Bradford. W. Smith represented Keighley East Ward from 1934 until the Second World War. There was more success in Bradford. The Bradford ILP ward groups had survived in Manningham, Thornton, Great Horton, East Bowling and Tong, and A Tetley won Tong for the ILP in 1932, 1935 and 1937. In 1937 he was jointly returned with A. L. Brown, and the ILP also won East Bowling with J. Cariss in 1934 and 1937. In 1933 Foster Sunderland, President of the Bradford Labour Party, just failed to defeat one of the most reactionary members of the City Council due to the loss of votes to the ILP candidate. The Labour Party reflected bitterly that the

ILP is able to take pride in the fact that they handed Mr. J. T. Waterhouse the power to cut the milk allowance at Nursery School and to repeat the many other economics which Waterhouse has supported. The Yorkshire ILP still

has some marginal influence, and could irritate and undermine the Labour Party, but its influence was greatly diminished and it had much less than 10 per cent of the support it once commanded.¹¹⁶

Rivalling and examining the Yorkshire Division and its branches in the 1920s was the Scottish Division of the ILP, which emerged strongly after the Glasgow strike of 1919, when trade unionism, the BSP and other socialist and labourism organisations were defeated, although it returned the only two ILP MPs in 1918 – William Graham for Edinburgh Central and Neil Maclean for Glasgow Govan. The Glasgow branches of the 1920s rose to 4,000 members in the 1920s and with other Scottish ILP branches had about 6,000 to 7,000 members and superseded the Yorkshire Division and came to dominate the ILP.¹¹⁷ Indeed, the Scottish Division had 297 branches, about 28 per cent of the branches of the ILP, in 1925.¹¹⁸ Throughout the 1920s the Scottish Division developed a substantial parliamentary presence. The ILP returned 33 MPs in the 1922 general election of whom 15 were for Scottish ILP seats, eight for Glasgow, including James Maxton (Bridgeton) and John Wheatley (Shettleston).¹¹⁹ This success projected Maxton and Wheatley forward in the national ILP. Thereafter, the Scottish Division prospered in the 1920s. Nevertheless, the

Scottish Division began to control the ILP through the batch of ‘Clydeside’ MPs that they had returned in 1922. Table 7.1 reveals the continuing primacy of Scotland and Glasgow throughout the 1920s and the way in which it effectively was the ILP Parliamentary Group in the 1930s. Indeed, in the 1931 general election but before disaffiliation, it returned four of the five ILP MPs for Scottish seats: David Kirkwood (Dumbarton Burghs), James Maxton (Glasgow Bridgeton), George Buchanan (Glasgow Gorbals) and John McGovern (Glasgow Shettleston); the fifth being R. C. Wallhead for Merthyr. In the 1935 general election, Maxton was returned for Glasgow Bridgeton, Buchanan in the Glasgow Gorbals, and McGovern for Glasgow Shettleston. Campbell Stephen, a United Free Church Minister then a barrister, was returned for Glasgow Camlachie, where he had been MP from 1922 to 1931. In all four Glasgow seats the Labour Party lost its deposit. Tom Taylor, later Lord Taylor of Gryffe, and in 1935 the youngest member of

Table 7.1 The number of ILP Members of Parliament from 1918 to 1930, indicating the number of seats in Scotland, Glasgow and Yorkshire¹²⁰

<i>Year</i>	<i>ILP MPs</i>	<i>Scotland</i>	<i>Glasgow</i>	<i>Yorkshire</i>
1918	2	2	1	0
1919	3	2	1	1
1922	33	15	8	6
1923	44 (46)	17	7	7
1924	28	12	6	6
1929	37	16	7	5
1931	5	4	4	0
1935	4	4	4	0

Glasgow City Council, contested the seat for the ILP at Glasgow Govan and came in third in Tradeston; another ILP councillor, James Carmichael, later ILP then Labour MP for Bridgeton, contested the seat, and also came in third. Despite the importance of the Abyssinian crisis at this time, it is clear that unemployment, the work of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and social insurance figured more importantly than an international crisis, a reflection of the oft-made comment that the Scottish ILP was more interested in local domestic issues than international events.¹²¹

In Glasgow the ILP on the City Council grew from the seven who disaffiliated in 1932 to a peak of 14 following a by-election in 1936. In some areas of Glasgow, the ILP councillors remained dominant. The six local seats were held by the ILP in McGovern's Shettleston constituency, as were four of the six in Maxton's Bridgeton constituency – gains against Labour opposition. The Labour Party and ILP seem to have been in an electoral agreement in 1933, but the ILP was still able to make local political advances in the mid and late 1930s – having recorded four successes in 1932, three in 1933 and five each in 1935, it still recorded two victories in 1936 and 1937.¹²² ILP opposition to the Labour Party only really increased when Patrick Dollan, who had left the ILP in 1932, was appointed the first Catholic Lord Provost of Glasgow in 1938. The Glasgow ILP felt that his running of Glasgow Council could largely be explained as the actions of a megalomaniac.¹²³

The Scottish ILP and its branches had clearly taken over from the Yorkshire Division by the mid-1920s and was to dominate the national ILP throughout the 1930s, despite the loss of a great many branches and members after disaffiliation. The Norwich branch, as we have seen, doubled its membership in the course of the 1930s and was to have about 40 per cent of the ILP's membership by the outbreak of the Second World War but was only once able to return one MP in what was a two-member constituency, and that was Dorothy Jewson in 1923. Despite the strain of this relationship between the ILP from 1929 onwards, it accepted the need for municipal, as well as parliamentary, politics and worked with the Labour Party on the Norwich Council from 1929 to 1936 – with Dorothy Jewson and George Johnson winning municipal seats in 1929. When Jewson got married and left Norwich in 1938, Miss Uting was given a free run by the Labour Party to replace her, though she lost by 88 votes. In 1939 the ILP had four members on the Norwich Council, and when George Johnson was elevated to the Aldermanic branch, the vacancy defeated was filled by the unopposed ILP representative, W. Channell.¹²⁴

The branches of the other divisions did less well and, as we have seen, many of the London branches left with the RPC in the mid-1930s and, likewise, many of the Lancashire branches left as the Unity Movement split from the ILP and formed the SLP. There were quite clearly regional tendencies, many Midland and London branches supporting connections with the CPGB and many others in Yorkshire, Scotland and Lancashire, favouring a continuing relationship with the Labour Party – local circumstances and connections often influencing events.

Conclusion

What then are we to conclude about the amorphous grass roots membership of the ILP? Several tenuous points can be made. First of all, the grass roots opinion of the ILP varied immensely over a quarter of a century between 1914 and 1939 as it responded to, and was shaped by, national events and the divisions. The branches, federations and divisions were also subject to various local political issues, but what is clear is that the overwhelming majority of the ILP membership, and particularly those in the large and dominating divisions of Yorkshire, Scotland and Eastern England, which were committed to an ethically based social democracy of the ILP, committed to parliamentary democracy, and independently working to reject the authoritarianism of the democratic centralism of communism and the trade union domination of the Labour Party. Secondly, whilst many members came and went from the ILP branches, according to the success of the ILP, there was a core of socialists who were committed to living the life of a socialist within the conditions and restrictions of a capitalist society. Thirdly, by 1918 they, and those who joined them, had come to realise that the ILP was no longer likely to be a major party in British politics, and focused upon education and propaganda work, raising money through social and leisure activities in order to ensure an elevated presence in social democracy. They made much of moment and form, but form is what faded when branches failed, moment becoming more important as the ILP became a sect, a socialist sect, committed to a pluralistic view of socialism based upon the right of the individual to express their opinion. This was the enduring commitment and, indeed, the legacy of the ILP. In the end, the ILP was unwilling to abandon its independence of thought, wished to establish a plurality of socialism that might operate through a socialist unity which would operate in all three communities: the local, the national, and the international. ILP socialism was not to be, but as both Bullock and Cohen have quite rightly suggested, the ILP held an endearing and enduring commitment to social democracy and independent thought, though a debilitating one in the age of mass party dominance and the rise of fascism.

Notes

- 1 Stephen Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism, 1883–1896', *History Workshop*, 4.1 (October 1977), 5–56. Yeo's views have been developed and extended in his new book, *A Usable Past: A History of Association, Cooperation and Education for un-Statist Socialism in 19th and 20th Century Britain. Volume 2, A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain 1883–1896*, Brighton, Edward Everett Root, 2018.
- 2 The Bradford ILP organised their own orchestra to offer a cheaper form of entertainment than that offered by the Orchestra that often performed in St. George's Hall, Bradford, where the ILP was born.
- 3 Edward Palmer Thompson, 'Homage to Tom Maguire', in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds), *Essays in Labour History*, London, Macmillan, 1960; Asa Briggs, *Chartist Studies*, London, Macmillan, 1959.
- 4 Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, 1880–1906*; Michael Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics: The Labour movement in Preston*

- 1880–1940, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987; Keith Laybourn and Jack Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour 1890–1918*, Brighton, Croom Helm, 1984, reprinted under the same title in Routledge Library Editions: The Labour Movement, London, Routledge, 2019.
- 5 Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*; Worley (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots*; Cohen, 'Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank?'.
- 6 Cohen, 'Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank?'; R. Stevens, "'Rapid Demise or Slow Death": The Independent Labour Party in Derby, 1932–1945', *Midland History*, 22 (1997), 113–30.
- 7 Stuart Ball, Andrew Thorpe and Matthew Worley, 'Elections, Leaflets and Whist Drives: Constituency Party Members in Britain between the Wars', Chapter 2 of Worley (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots*, pp. 7–32.
- 8 Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*.
- 9 About 60 collections of ILP branch records.
- 10 The 1,000 or so branches of the early 1920s claimed about 50,000 members, two-thirds of whom were fee paying, whilst by the end of the 1930s there were only about 2,500 to 3,000 members for 200 or more branches.
- 11 Ilford ILP Minutes, 14 May 1924 and the Ninth Annual Report 4 March 1925.
- 12 Ibid., Tenth Annual Report, March 1926.
- 13 Ibid., Eleventh Annual Report, 2 March 1927.
- 14 Ibid., Eleventh Annual Report, 2 March 1927.
- 15 Ibid., 4 September 1927.
- 16 Ibid., 14 December 1927.
- 17 Ibid., 27 November 1927.
- 18 Ibid., Twelfth Annual Report, 1 March 1928.
- 19 West Bromwich Minutes, 8 May 1933.
- 20 According to the last secretary of the Bradford branch, a painter by trade, the branch loaned out the records to Joanna Scott in the early 1970s and never got them back. She was researching the role of women in Bradford in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but, according to Jack Reynolds, she denied ever taking the records.
- 21 Burton-on-Trent ILP Minutes, a note dated 20 September 1971 reflecting upon the history of the branch.
- 22 Bilston ILP Letter and Record Book (Midland District), presented to monthly meeting, 4 October 1925. It had 50 members according to its minutes of 12 November 1925.
- 23 Bilston ILP Minutes, 5 and 26 January 1926.
- 24 Ibid., 18 September 1927.
- 25 Ibid., 29 January 1933, indicated that Fred Longdon was born in 1887 at Ashton-under-Lyne. He was a working-class scholar at Ruskin College, Oxford, where he won a distinction with his Oxford Diploma in Economic and Political Science. According to the minutes, he was imprisoned for two years for his opposition to the Great War, had written 'many useful works and is a born orator'. Birmingham City ILP Minutes of 4 December 1924 had Longdon down as the Chairman of that branch.
- 26 Birmingham City ILP Minutes, 5 May 1927; Ilford ILP Minutes, 18 February 1920.
- 27 Ilford Minute Book 1924–1928, Monthly Meeting and Ninth Annual Report, to about 75 members, 4 March 1925.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 ILP 9–4 Head Office circulars and reports, February 1921.
- 31 *Labour's Northern Voice*, 5 August 1927, in an article on the 'ILP and the Labour Party' by Jenkin.
- 32 Southall ILP Minutes for 14 February 1924 recorded the formation of a study circle.
- 33 West Bromwich ILP Minutes, 4 September 1925.

- 34 Edinburgh Central ILP, ACC 5241 (8) and undated circular, possibly a draft circular for early 1918.
- 35 Bilston ILP Minutes, 12 November 1925.
- 36 Auchinairn ILP Minutes, 26 August 1929.
- 37 Bilston ILP Letter and Record Book, Minutes 1925–1933, 18 October, 1 November and 24 November 1925.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 24 July 1927.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 12 November 1927.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 28 January 1928.
- 41 Bo'ness ILP Minutes, 10 April and 7 December 1927.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 5 December 1928.
- 43 Bilston ILP EC Minutes, 24 February 1926; *Daily Mail*, 15 July 1924, an article entitled 'Faith, Hope and Dorothy'.
- 44 Chingford Women's Group, 10, 13, 30 June 1927.
- 45 Ilford ILP Minutes, 2, 21 March 1921, 12 July 1922.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 5 March 1925, March 1926, and 1 March 1928, all at Annual Meetings.
- 47 Ilford ILP Minutes, 4 June 1924.
- 48 West Bromwich ILP Minutes, 25 January 1933.
- 49 Stan Iveson and Roger Brown, *ILP Clarion House: A Monument to a Movement*, Leeds, Independent Labour Publications, 1987.
- 50 Southall ILP Minutes, 9 February 1922.
- 51 West Bromwich ILP Minutes, 10 July and 6 November 1925, and 9 January 1927.
- 52 Ilford ILP Minutes, 11th Annual Report on 2 March 1927 and 12th Annual Report on 1 March 1928.
- 53 Bo'ness ILP Minutes, 2 December 1931.
- 54 Shettleston ILP Minutes, 21 August 1936.
- 55 Manchester City Clarion Café Minutes, 14 March 1919, listed 16 Federations, the other 14 being Barrow, Blackburn, Bolton, Crewe, Eccles, Hyde, North Staffs, Nelson, Oldham, Preston, Rochdale, Stafford, Stockport, and Warrington.
- 56 Manchester City ILP Clarion Café Minutes, 8 January 1918.
- 57 Dorothy Jewson became a Divisional representative in 1932.
- 58 Manchester City ILP Clarion Café Minutes, 11 September 1918.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 11 September 1918.
- 60 *Ibid.*, letter from Mrs. C. A. Findley to Miss Robinson, 10 November 1919.
- 61 *Ibid.*, letter from Donald H. Ashley, 9 March 1919.
- 62 ILP Glasgow Federation Executive Minutes, 1917–1919, 10 November 1917.
- 63 Manchester City ILP Clarion Café Minutes, 9 March 1919.
- 64 Birmingham City ILP Minutes, 3 September 1925.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 4 December 1924.
- 66 *Ibid.*, statement of Joseph Southall dated 7 August 1927.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 29 February 1926.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 25 March 1926.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 7 April 1927.
- 70 *Ibid.*, endorsing the Birmingham Federation's report for the Annual Conference at Blackpool in 1932.
- 71 NAC Minutes, 23–24 April 1935, IE Minutes, 19 June 1935.
- 72 Industrial Committee Minutes, 2 May 1936.
- 73 *New Leader*, 7 May 1937; also look at Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, pp. 54–62.
- 74 John Lochore in I. MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, Volume II, Edinburgh, 1991, p. 316. Also quoted in Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, p. 44.
- 75 Bilston ILP Minutes, 13 November 1927, 19 February 1928 and 11 March 1928.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 13 November 1927; Chingford South ILP Minutes, throughout 1925.
- 77 Chingford and Higham Park, ILP, Social Committee, 18 March 1934.

- 78 Birmingham East ILP Balance sheet, one sheet, dated February 1929; ILP 9–35, Eastbourne ILP Accounts, year ending February 1938.
- 79 Glasgow Federation Accounts, 29 February 1932.
- 80 Launceston ILP Account Book.
- 81 Bridlington ILP Accounts 1929–1930; Hutesontown ILP, statement 1929–1930; Leyton ILP Revenue Statement, 31 December 1929.
- 82 Shettleston ILP Minutes, 12 March 1926; Erith ILP Financial Statement, 28 February 1930.
- 83 Leyton ILP Revenue Statement, 31 December 1931; Glasgow Federation Minutes, 29 February 1932; Manchester ILP Central Clarion Café Minutes, 27 January 1919, when the potato pie supper made £1 4s 6d, and 13 December 1920, when a potato pie and whist drive was arranged for New Year's Eve. Shettleston's activities are in the Shettleston ILP Minutes, 3 September 1936 and 12 May 1938.
- 84 Bilston ILP Minutes, 2 September 1928.
- 85 Ilford Minutes, 25 June 1924; Bilston ILP Minutes, 3 June 1928.
- 86 *Bradford Pioneer*, 10 September 1926.
- 87 Cohen, 'Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank?', 62; Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, chapter 3, pp. 29–62.
- 88 Bridgeton Branch Social Committee Cash Book (Mitchell Library, Glasgow), and Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream*, p. 62.
- 89 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 63.
- 90 Keighley ILP Minutes of the Social Committee, 12 July 1920.
- 91 Keighley ILP Minutes, annual meetings, 16 February 1927, 3 February 1929, 4 February 1934, and 13 February 1938.
- 92 *New Leader*, 26 April 1935.
- 93 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 41–2.
- 94 Edinburgh Central ILP Minutes, ACC 5241 (7) in the National Library of Scotland, a circular from A. J. Sutton, Secretary, and H. J. Wilson, Treasurer, of the Bradford ILP dated 29 June 1918.
- 95 The author has some photos of Jowett Hall and the Labour Institute, and some of these appear in Keith Laybourn and David James (eds), *'The Rising Sun of Socialism': The Independent Labour Party in the Textile District of the West Riding of Yorkshire between 1890 and 1914*, Bradford, West Yorkshire Archive Service, the West Yorkshire Archive and Archaeology Joint Committee and Bradford Library Service, 1991.
- 96 *Bradford Pioneer*, 25 March 1927.
- 97 Manchester Central Clarion Café ILP Minutes, 12 February 1918, where there is a reference to the Maintenance Fund whose condition 'was not at all satisfactory'; also, 26 March 1918 Special Members meeting at the Clarion Café.
- 98 *Ibid.*, 7 February 1919.
- 99 Ilford ILP Minutes, 26 February 1925.
- 100 Hutesontown ILP Statement, 1929–1930.
- 101 Shettleston ILP Minutes, Rights of Deed, 31 March 1924.
- 102 *Ibid.*, 16 March 1936.
- 103 Birmingham City ILP Minutes, 19 February 1936.
- 104 Bridlington ILP Account Statement, 1929–1930, which showed that the Hall Fund had risen to £76 10s 6.5d.
- 105 Ilford ILP Minutes, 27 November 1927.
- 106 Keighley ILP Minutes, Minute Book 1927 to 1930, Minute Book 1931–1951, the information being drawn from the annual meetings of the branch which normally occurred in the first week in February each year.
- 107 Keighley ILP Minutes, Annual General Meeting, 12 February 1938.
- 108 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 31, and other sources referred to in other chapters.

- 109 Ibid., p. 37; quoting an EC Report, 2 August 1935; NAC Minutes, 30 July 1925.
- 110 NAC Minutes, 15–16 July 1921.
- 111 Ibid., 15–16 July 1921; Head Office papers of about 200 sheets.
- 112 *Leeds Citizen*, 19 February 1926.
- 113 *Bradford Pioneer*, 10 September 1926, editorial.
- 114 Ibid., 10 September 1926, editorial.
- 115 Ibid., 9 April 1920.
- 116 Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn, *Labour Heartland: A History of the Labour Party in West Yorkshire during the Inter-War Years 1918–1939*, Bradford, University of Bradford Press, 1987, pp. 108–9; *Bradford Pioneer*, 3 November 1933; Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 75–6.
- 117 ILP 9–4 (BLPES), in Head Office circulars, 13 April 1921.
- 118 Catriona MacDonald, ‘Following the Procession: Scottish Labour 1918–1945’, in Worley (ed), *Labour’s Grass Roots*, pp. 33–53, particularly p. 43.
- 119 ILP Glasgow Federation Executive Committee Minute Books, 1917–1919, contains a letter from John Wheatley, dated 2 November, asking to be made nominee for the Shettleston Division, and a minute on 16 November indicates that he had been accepted by the Shettleston branch.
- 120 This information is drawn from various newspapers, including *The New Leader*, *The Bradford Pioneer* and *The Leeds Citizen*. The statistics are also partly drawn from the listing, though not a full and accurate one, of the constituency parliamentary results, presented in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_Labour_Party.
- 121 Cohen, ‘Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank?’, pp. 58–9.
- 122 Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 75.
- 123 Cohen, ‘Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank?’, pp. 61–2; *Glasgow Herald*, 14 February 1938; and *New Leader*, 13 January 1939.
- 124 Cohen, ‘Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank?’, pp. 66–7.

Conclusion

In 1914, the ILP was the major socialist party in British politics, with between about 35,000 and 50,000 members. It had emerged from a group of semi-autonomous socialist organisations, labour unions and ILP clubs formed in the 1890s and was essentially a working-class organisation, though it always had a significant and prominent middle-class presence. Formed as a national organisation at Bradford in 1893, it had developed its National Administrative Council into a representative body of seven officials and members and, eventually, nine divisional representatives. The NAC agreed with the policy of the ILP, but it was guided and checked by the annual Easter conferences, which could initiate policy and endorse or reject its views, much in the way of other political parties at the time. Yet, as can be seen in the Great War, the Conference and NAC decisions were not necessarily seen to be binding for, as Jowett argued at the 1916 ILP Conference, the decision to oppose war and support peace at the 1915 Conference was an institutional decision, individuals as a matter of conscience having the right to support or oppose the decision. Jowett's assessment reflected the non-conformist and dissenting, almost Quaker-like, thoughts of some of its founders who often adopted an 'as the moment take me' approach to policy. In effect, the early ILP developed the idea of an individual commitment to socialism which, whilst not eschewing the collectivism of trade unionism, since some of the early ILPers were also trade unionists, fitted well into the democratic socialist attitudes, operating within a municipal and parliamentary system, which it endorsed for much of its existence. This was the core principle of the ILP, but it came at a cost because whilst it considered itself as vitally an educational and propaganda organisation, especially after the formation of the LRC/Labour Party in 1900 and its adoption of a socialist constitution in 1918, this atomistic approach was never likely to sustain the high level of unity required of a major political party. The ILP was constantly divided and capable of changing policy, perhaps more than most political parties, and particularly so when it formed an Executive Committee and an Inner Executive Committee in the 1930s pursuing its 'will o the wisp' of a worker-led revolutionary policy through democratic centralism. Yet, endorsed by such a tradition of individualism and freedom of thought and action, and shaped by the differing economic and political issues arising in the different divisions, it is quite understandable that the ILP was never prepared to give up its

independence of thought and action to the Third International in the early 1920s and early 1930s, nor to the Labour Party over the imposition of the 1929 Standing Orders, which led to its disaffiliation in 1932. In the end, the vital factors of autonomy and independence of thought and action are what characterised the ILP between 1914 and 1939, just as much as it had before.

The ILP's underlying and dominating influence of an ethical socialism largely committed to social democracy operating through municipal and parliamentary politics was not a hyperbole and certainly helps to answer the four main questions, or groupings of questions, raised at the beginning of this book. The first of these questions focused upon the Great War and essentially posed the question – how were the fortunes of the ILP shaped by the Great War and what was the impact of the ILP's commitment to pacifism? It is clear that the ILP traditionally has been seen as a pacifist party, the 1915 Conference having passed a resolution to that effect, and that its future as a major party was blighted by the Labour Party introducing a socialist constitution in 1918. Yet, the evidence is more complex than this and suggests that the ILP members were, for instance, far from being pacifists, even in the so-called hotspots of pacifism such as Bradford and Huddersfield. Nevertheless, the ILP earned a reputation as a pacifist party, especially in the first three years of the War, when its membership declined substantially. However, once the ILP's policy became part of a broader national socialist and labour commitment to peace, from 1917 onwards, and partly on the basis of both peace and an Allied victory, the membership of the ILP recovered. The evidence offered here suggests that by this stage both the anti-war and the pro-war socialists were committed to peace, much as argued by Paul Ward and Marcus Morris. Indeed, it was not the perceived pacifism of the ILP that diminished it as a political party but rather the Labour Party's introduction of a new socialist constitution in 1918, which ensured that the ILP was no longer the major British political party of the socialists in Britain.

Secondly, the ILP was in a quandary – should it merge into the Labour Party, should it move towards the communist party and the Third International, or should it remain an independent party promoting socialist unity and a Socialist Commonwealth? In addition, in a broader version of the future of the ILP, the second question asked – why did the ILP first expand and then decline in the 1920s? On balance, it must have been clear to all, after 1918, that the ILP was never going to be a major political party again, that ambition had been thwarted by the Labour Party Constitution. Equally, it was clear that ILP members were at odds with the vision of either the state-based socialism of the Labour Party or the lack of democracy of the CPGB and the Third International. Nevertheless, as Clifford Allen and others emphasised, it took the superior role of being an independent body acting as a nucleus to the Labour Party under Allen and thus, as Bullock suggests, made the Party look arrogant. The ILP emphasised that socialism was more than the state controlling industry and services but about true social democracy, and indeed true community and industrial democracy. The guild socialist constitution of 1922 reminded socialists of that and, although broadly ignored, it encouraged Allen to draw upon his friends to finance a movement which began to win community

support, and consequently parliamentary support, in Scotland and particularly in Glasgow, as well as Yorkshire, Lancashire and London. That relationship thrived until the political power of the ILP moved away from Allen and his middle-class friends to Maxton and the more working-class sections of the Party from the mid-1920s onwards. This transition of power operated within the attempt to move away from the long-term vision of achieving socialism to the more immediate scenario of the 'Socialism in Our Time' campaign and 'The Living Wage' policy, with the hope of establishing socialism more quickly, but conceding that it would be operating within the context of the capitalist society. Allen's control of that policy was eclipsed by the more revolutionary intent of Maxton, especially once Allen resigned as chairman of the ILP at the end of 1925. From that point, the income coming from Allen and his friends dried up and most of the branches, who sometimes received income from the NAC, struggled for money and often could no longer afford to sponsor MPs or councillors in the way that they had once done. By 1928, the ILP was discussing its future in the light of the failure to make much of an advance to socialism; was it to become independent, was it to become an intellectual study group, was it to join with communist organisations, or could it seek to form a new alliance of Left-Wing socialism? It was within this context that the ill-fated Cook-Maxton Manifesto of 1928 occurred, when it also became evident that Maxton was not a team player. This debate became something of a prelude for the ILP's disaffiliation from the ILP.

The third question, and the most vital question, raised in this book is – why did the ILP disaffiliate from the Labour Party and what were its consequences of this decision? Most of those involved in promoting disaffection, including Fred Jowett and Jennie Lee, had, by the end of the 1930s, including Fred Jowett and Jennie Lee, by the end of the 1930s, come to agree that the decision to disaffiliate, was a mistake. But could it have been avoided? Recent writers and historians are divided on the issue. Whilst Middlemass and others have argued that it was 'suicide in a fit of insanity', echoing views expressed at the time, a product of an emotional clash of ideas that Cohen and Bullock have maintained was a long-thought-out and sensible decision, whatever the final outcome. The latter view seems to rely upon the fact that there was intense discussion within the ILP at the time, although this does not in any way negate the irrational nature of the decision. Also, the fact that many branches were not involved in the Bradford Conference of July 1932 meant that a fully inclusive and truly reflective decision had not been made. Indeed, the decision came at a cost to the ILP. It had already lost individual members, such as MacDonald and Snowden, to the Labour Party in the 1930s, and several other prominent figures, such as John Beckett, Robert Forgan and Oswald Mosley had formed Mosleys' New Party, soon to become the British Union of Fascists, by the early 1930s. Many branches left the Party, and about a third of the membership was gone within one year of disaffiliation. Scotland was divided on the one hand between P. J. Dollan and those who identified with the Labour Party, and Jimmy Maxton and his supporters, who fought for political independence and a new, amorphous, 'revolutionary policy', of which few had any understanding of what it meant. Local differences were to see Unity Group, based in Lancashire,

split from the ILP in the mid-1930s because of its commitment to parliamentary politics. The RPC, the Marxist group of London, split from the ILP in the 1930s because of the influence of communism and its demand for a more revolutionary set of policies – albeit that after the Seventh Congress of the Third International in 1935, which saw the abandonment of world revolution in favour of a popular front against fascism, it was clear that the ILP was possibly more revolutionary in its views than the CPGB.

What then did the denuded ILP feel that it was offering the British people? This fourth question is more difficult to answer but may have much to do with the nature of the diminishing membership of the ILP, which was shaping it into a politically effete sect by the end of the 1930s. The ILP had already recognised that it was never going to be a major political party in Britain. The fact is that it had a core of support dedicated to living the life of a socialist, as Stephen Yeo has suggested, for its early years. The relics of the past – Clarion clubs, Socialist Sunday Schools and even elements of the old Labour Church movement – survived into the inter-war years to be complemented by women's groups and a Guild of Youth movement, literature clubs, ILP cafes and cinemas and a continuing cultural and political environment. Families and individuals often kept these fossilising networks together. Jimmy Maxton of Glasgow, the Pugh family of the Bilston ILP, John Longdon of the Midland Division, Fred Jowett of Bradford, Elijah Sandham in Lancashire, and John Middleton Murry and Dorothy Jewson of Norwich gave the movement a sense of direction and purpose for a while. However, such members, networks and commitments diminished further as the Abyssinian crisis, the Spanish Civil War and the Munich crisis projected Britain and the world to the Second World War – the party even then being further divided between pacifists, anti-war groups, and those who were prepared to fight fascism.

What then is the final word on the quarter of a century of ILP politics between 1914 and 1939? Perhaps it should be that driven by a commitment to a pluralistic and individualistic vision of socialism, where the freedom of thought and action was vital to its hard-core members and some of its temporary supporters, it is clear that the ILP never possessed the essential unity necessary to become a mass party. It was still a large socialist party at the end of the Great War but was little more than a sect by 1939, hovering on the margins of British socialist politics. It was the great defender of social democracy and pluralism, but it had not adapted to the changing times of intensely organised party politics and was left behind, although its commitment to social democracy, guild socialism and 'The Living Wage' still have relevance in modern British society. Nevertheless, as Dowse's telling book title implies, the ILP had been left in the centre of British socialist politics and thus on the very fringes of British politics. By the mid-1930s it had become, in Dalton's words, the irritating 'ILP flea'.

Epilogue

The ILP continued until it ceased to exist as a political party in 1975, becoming Independent Labour Publications, which eventually re-joined the Labour Party. It had spawned many different offshoot political parties and socialist groups throughout its existence. It had been the intellectual godparent of the Labour Party until at least the Great War but found its position challenged once the Labour Party became a socialist party in 1918. It nevertheless retained some influence within the political Labour movement until the late 1920s and perhaps even the collapse of the Labour government in August 1931 and disaffiliation in July 1932. Thereafter, there were splits and departures on a grand scale. John Beckett and John Scanlon moved to the right and joined Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, though most defectors remained within the socialist movement. The Scottish heartland of the ILP saw many members of the ILP drift away. Led by P. J. Dollan they formed a National Committee of every area on Scotland on August 1932 with the 170 delegates who therefore were expelled from the ILP. At this conference, the Scottish Socialist Party was formally established and began the process of setting up federations or branches. It reported a hundred branches and more than 2,000 members at its first annual conference at Easter in 1933 and *Forward*, edited by Emrys Hughes, became its official organ in 1934. It became divided on many of the issues connected with the Moscow Show Trials and the Spanish Civil War, began to decline and, in the face of declining membership and the rise of the Scottish Labour Party, wound up in 1940.

The Socialist League, which gathered many ex-ILP affiliationists in 1932, was formed on 2 October as a result of an alliance with the short-lived Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda (SSIP) established by G. D. H. Cole and Margaret Cole in 1931. It produced many books and articles and, initially, this brought Ernest Bevin, E. F. Wise, H.N. Brailsford and Cole together as the two organisations merged. In 1933, the League affiliated to the Labour Party with about 2,000 members. It was soon to be dominated by Sir Stafford Cripps, became embroiled in the issue about Socialist Unity but was forced to wind up by the Labour Party in 1937.

The Independent Socialist Party (ISP), unlike the previous two organisations, were largely Lancashire affiliations who had remained within the ILP but left with E. J. Sandham in May 1934 and was led by Murry, Sandham and Abbott.

It favoured revolution by enlightened democratic consent. The ISP had branches in Lancashire, Nottingham Hastings, Maidstone and even one in Sierra Leone. Murry helped to form a London branch, but he resigned and re-joined the Labour Party in 1936. The Party opposed the war in 1939, Sandham died in 1944 and the Party continued on under Abbott until 1951, when it was wound up.

In the end, most of the offshoots of the ILP failed or merged into other organisations and the members of the ILP itself largely moved back into the Labour Party, formally so by the end of the twentieth century. From 1918 the ILP had seen itself as largely a propaganda and educational body for the wider socialist movement and, perhaps, its duty had been done by the end of the 1930s. Despite its demise, there is no doubting the impact it had exerted upon democratic socialism and its organisation in Britain.



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Appendices



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Appendix 1

The constitution of the Independent Labour Party, 1922

Source: Independent Labour Party, *The New Constitution of the Independent Labour Party*. ILP, London, 1923.

The ILP is a Socialist Organisation and has as its object the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth.

The Socialist Commonwealth is the State of Society in which Land and Capital are communally owned and the process of production, distribution, and exchange are social functions.

Political and industrial democracy

The Independent Labour Party believes in democracy organised both in its political and industrial aspects, for communal ends.

The basis of political democracy must be the whole body of citizens exercising authority through a national representative assembly, directly elected by the people, with a decentralised and extended system of local government.

The basis of industrial democracy must be (1) the organisation of wage and salary earners, and (2) the organisation of consumers.

A central body of representatives of the people both as producers and consumers must decide the amount and character of both communal production and service necessary. The internal management of each industry must be in the hands of the workers, administrators, technical and manual, engaged therein, openly in conjunction with the representatives of organised consumers. Experience will determine the methods of co-operation and the detailed form or organisation, as step by step is taken towards the attainment of a Socialist Commonwealth.

Immediate objects

The ILP declares that its immediate objects are:

- a To disseminate as widely as possible a knowledge of Socialist principles.
- b To obtain control of national and local governing bodies, and to assist in extending their activities on Socialist lines.

- c To co-ordinate and develop Trade Union organisation with a view to securing working-class solidarity and obtaining control over industry.
- d To strengthen and extend the Co-operative movement, with a view to its participation in the administration of the Socialist Commonwealth.

The transition period

In the Transition from Capitalism to Socialism, the Independent Labour Party will work for legislation and industrial changes which contribute to its final aim and will oppose those which tend to preserve the existing state of economic exploitation by Capitalism. Any scheme of nationalisation or municipalisation must

- a Give the workers in the industry an effective share in and responsibility for its administration as defined above.
- b Tend to eliminate Capitalism, and prevent the creation of a new means of financial exploitation.

Internationalism and imperialism

The Independent Labour Party forms part of the International Movement and co-operates with kindred bodies in other countries to assist in the worldwide spreading of socialism.

It recognises that the interest of the workers throughout the world of whatever race, colour or creed are one, and that war, imperialism and the exploitation of native races are mainly caused by the greed of competing capitalist groups. It therefore realises that the Socialist Commonwealth must be international and that the prevention of these evils can only be served by a world organisation of free people, co-operating in the production and distribution of the world's goods. With this end in view, it works for the development to its fullest extent of the Industrial and Social Movement and for the most effective action by that movement in the prevention of war, the abolition of conscription and militarism in all their forms, and the liberation of subject people. In particular, it is in favour of this country taking the initiative in making a definite proposal to the other nations for immediate universal disarmament by mutual agreement.

Method

The Independent Labour Party takes its part in the struggle of the workers to win freedom from economic tyranny imposed by the capitalist class and capitalist State. It holds that the best way of effecting a peaceful change to Socialism is by the organisation of the workers politically to capture the power of the State and Industry to take over the control and management of the industrial machine.

The Independent Labour Party recognises that circumstances may arise when a Government or the reactionary class might attempt to suppress liberty or thwart the national will. It holds that to defeat such an attempt Democracy must use to the utmost extent its political and industrial powers.

Appendix 2

Socialism in our time, 1926

Source: ‘*Socialism in Our Time*’ Address of the Chairman to the ILP Annual Conference. Whitley Bay, April 1926, London, ILP, 1926. Also R. E. Dowse, *Left in the Centre, The Independent Labour Party 1893–1940*, London, Longman, 1966, pp. 212–15.

The ILP sets before itself the object of winning Socialism for this generation. The scourge of unemployment, the failure of capitalist industry to re-organise itself after the check of the Great War, our daily experience of the intensified struggle between the possessing classes and the workers are proof that the old order is breaking down. The situation demands a conscious and resolute Socialist policy, planned deliberately to carry us rapidly through the period of transition from the old to the new civilisation.

The ILP, therefore, renews its determination to work for Socialism in a spirit at once militant and constructive, in every sphere in which the necessary changes in society must take place.

Direct attack on poverty

The ILP believes that the Socialist policy should be concentrated upon a direct attack on poverty. It asserts that the workers have the first claim upon the wealth of the nation and denies the claim of those who live by owning instead of working. The semi-starvation wages now paid are not always an intolerable evil in themselves; they are the immediate cause of extensive unemployment. The machines stand idle because the masses lack a means to buy. The ILP urges that the whole Labour movement should therefore bend all its energies to the achievement of a national Living Wage, which would ensure the workers adequate food, clothing and housing, and the essentials of civilisation.

The ILP sees the Living Wage as the first demand for justice, which has the power, if we follow its logic with courage, to carry us rapidly towards the realisation of a Socialist State.

Banking and imports

Since higher money wages would be worthless without the power to control prices, the demand for a Living Wage necessitates (a) the establishment of a

national banking system, with the control of currency and credits for national purposes, and (b) the nationalisation of the importation of food and raw materials. With credit and raw materials under public control, production can be directed and re-organised for the supply of the workers' needs.

Transport and power

If wages are to be raised and prices kept steady at a low level, cheap transport and mechanical power are (with credit and raw materials) the keys to re-organisation and efficiency in industry. The policy of the Living Wage would create such a demand for better housing that the national organisation of the building industry and of production of building materials would be essential.

Land and housing

The Living Wage involves the re-organisation and development of Agriculture, and the public ownership of land. The adoption of a Living Wage would create such a demand for better housing that the national organisation of the building industry and of the production of building materials would be essential.

The series of measures would lay the foundation of the new Socialist State.

A labour living wage commission

The ILP suggests that the whole Labour movement should at once set up a Commission of its own to fix a Living Wage, representing the minimum standard of civilised existence which should be tolerated. It should then make the demand for this standard the key of its policy both politically and industrially.

Parliamentary policy

In the view of the ILP, the Labour Party in Parliament should not be satisfied with opposing the actions of the Government, but should seek any and every opportunity of asserting the demand for a Living Wage and of advocating the broad Socialist programme through which alone it can be realised. The ILP considers that the Labour Party should make it clear that it will introduce this programme whenever the opportunity to take office recurs. Immediate steps should be taken to prepare measures for the necessary economic re-organisation, so that Labour may be ready to introduce them without delay.

The fact that it had only a minority behind it should not deter a Labour Government from this purpose. The responsibility should be placed upon Labour's opponents of rejecting the Socialist measures proposed. By this means the issue of the poverty of the people and the proposals of constructive Socialism would be thrust into the forefront of practical policies.

Industrial policy

Side by side with the advocacy of this Parliamentary policy the ILP urges that Labour should stand behind every group of underpaid workers who struggle to attain the standard of civilisation demanded as a national minimum. The ILP expects its members to belong to their appropriate Trades Union and to participate wholeheartedly in the industrial side of the Labour movement, with a view to strengthening the organisation of the workers and developing Trades Union organisation to secure working class solidarity, to assisting all efforts to secure the standard of civilisation demanded and to co-operating in the perfection of Trade Union organisation for the Socialist function of the administration of industry when the necessary economic re-organisation of industry takes place.

A call to service

The ILP calls upon all its members to devote themselves unsparingly in Parliament, in their Trade Unions, in every branch of public life, and in the day-to-day take of propaganda and organisation, to the fulfilment of this policy of transition from Capitalism to Socialism. Our task it to intensify the challenging spirit within the Labour movement, and to educate the public to understand the need for rapid and fundamental change. Our privilege it is by devoted service, the fighting spirit, and constructive capacity to convert Socialism into a practical reality.

Proposed addendum

The National Council of the ILP also proposes to table the following resolution for discussion at the Annual Conference, and asks that it shall be considered by the movement in the same way as the above. Should it be adopted it will be incorporated within the main resolution. The National Council has not included it now only because it embodies new proposal which it will be well to discuss separately.

Equal chance for workers' children

Further, in order to remove the burden of poverty from the homes of the workers, the ILP advocates, in addition to the Living Wage, the payment, out of direct taxation, of supplements to working-class incomes, varying with the number of persons in each household. This step towards social equality would begin the necessary redistribution of the national income according to needs. It would curtail the luxuries of the rich in order to win for the children of the poor an equal chance of life.

Appendix 3

The 1934 survey of the ILP branch attitudes towards campaigning with communists

Source: NAC Minutes, 10–11 February 1934.

Survey of co-operation with the CPGB

- 1 Has your branch co-operated with the Communist Party in general activities on the basis of the day-to-day struggles?

<i>Division</i>	<i>No. of Branches</i>	<i>Replies Received</i>	<i>No. CP</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>NP</i>
Scotland	98	48	7	20	15
North-East	23	10	2	6	2
Yorkshire	30	9	4	1	5
Midlands	33	14	1	7	7
East Anglia	8	4	1		3
London	68	28	2	5	21
South-West	14	4	1		3
Wales	26	9	1	2	7
Lancashire	53	17		4	13

- 2 Has your branch co-operated with the Communist Party on a more limited basis?

<i>Division</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Scotland	15	9
North-East	5	1
Yorkshire	21	3
Midlands	4	6
East Anglia	3	1
London	20	6
South-West	3	
Wales	7	2
Lancashire	6	7

3 If so, in what direction?

Anti-War	40
Anti-Fascist	26
Hunger March	33
Various	37

The last item includes Meerut, May Day, German Relief, Means Test, Housing, Air Pageants and Kilmarnock By-Election.

4 Is your branch favourable to the continuance of co-operation with the Communist Party in general activities?

<i>Division</i>	<i>Branches For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Votes For</i>	<i>Against</i>
Scotland	21	18	236	231
North-East	6	2	22	62
Yorkshire	2	5	33	47
Midlands	9	6	73	70
East Anglia	—	2	13	38
London	11	13	96	92
South-West	1	2	11	12
Wales	2	6	36	58
Lancashire	6	9	62	75
	58	63	582	686

5 Does your branch wish to limit co-operation with the Communist Party in the future to anti-war, unemployment, German relief, or other specific issues as they arise?

<i>Division</i>	<i>Branches For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Votes For</i>	<i>Against</i>
S	22	13	290	127
NE	3	5	25	11
Y	1	3	13	26
M	7	6	60	60
EA	2	1	65	7
L	20	5	113	50
SW	4		45	—
W	6	2	60	32
L	1	9	14	72
	66	44	685	385

6 Does your branch wish to discontinue co-operation with the CP entirely?

<i>Division</i>	<i>Branches For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Votes For</i>	<i>Against</i>
S	11	27	159	296
NE	2	7	56	25
Y	4	3	36	46
M	1	12	15	96
EA	0	3	9	54
London	2	20	18	148
SW	1	3	9	20
W	2	5	21	54
L	7	6	60	67
	30	86	383	806

7 Is your branch of the opinion that co-operation with the CP helped the future realisations of a united front of the working class?

(a) in the immediate struggle for working issues?

<i>Division</i>	<i>Branches For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Votes For</i>	<i>Against</i>
S	20	15	261	167
NE	4	1	23	45
Y	3	4	46	36
Midlands	11	2	100	33
EA	0	3	23	38
L	15	5	85	40
SW	3	1	245	2
W	3	3	34	32
L	6	6	61	56
	65	40	658	449

(b) in the revolutionary struggles?

<i>Division</i>	<i>Branches For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Votes For</i>	<i>Against</i>
S	27	10	284	151
NE	8		50	5
Y	5	3	40	44
M	5	8	54	82
EA	3		20	3
London	19	6	145	36
SW	3	1	38	9
W	6	3	71	20
L	5	7	46	64
	81	38	548	414

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